# Personalizing Tradition: Surinamese Maroon Music and Dance in Contemporary Urban Practice

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Abstract

Through comparing the repertoires, presentational characteristics, and rehearsal procedures of Surinamese Maroon culture-based performance groups within Paramaribo, I outline the concept of *personalizing tradition*. This is based on the premise that differing social and performative practices lead to different understandings of the same performance genre, and that culture-based collectives, like those discussed here, mobilize tradition in order to fulfill a variety of social needs and aspirations. Their personalizing practices lead to embodied understandings of a variety of concepts, among them tradition, culture, professionalism, and cosmopolitanism. Through learning and presenting this composite of physical significations, performers generate visual and sonic representations of Maroon cosmopolitanism, thereby articulating aspects of the lived realities of Maroons whose life experiences diverge from the most commonly circulated characterizations of Maroon society—namely a population isolated from (or even incapable of comprehending) cosmopolitan and national technologies, aesthetic forms, and knowledge systems.

Borrowing from jazz discourse, I posit that satisfaction and social poetic proficiencies arise from performers' adeptness at playing the changes, in other words their capacities to understand the changing social circumstances in which they are acting and selecting expressive gestures that compliment those circumstances. The concept of playing the changes helps initiate a turn away from assessments of right or wrong ("real" or "made up") and focus instead on the ability to portray oneself to one's best advantage, come what may.

Finally, I demonstrate the advantages of pursuing an integrated approach to performance analysis, in which the study of musical and choreographic elements of performance are examined in combination.

I dedicate this work to my family, with love and gratitude.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

This study explores the traditional performance genres of the Maroons, one of two groups of African descent in the small but ethnically diverse country of Suriname. I investigate the ways in which groups and their individual members personalize tradition through rehearsal and performance practices. My research is based on the principle that, although tradition is fostered by a collective, it is manifested through the creative work of individuals with their own vested interests within and beyond performance. I thus view tradition as both the product of a variety of social and creative practices, and itself a practice through which social actors affirm or challenge a variety of relationships between individuals, performance groups, and broader social entities, both directly experienced and imagined.[1]

I develop these ideas through a comparative study of Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba—three Maroon folkloric performance groups active within Paramaribo, Suriname's capital city. Although they perform overlapping repertories in similar contexts and within a relatively small geographic radius, each group fosters a distinctive style of rehearsal and public presentation. A close examination of the social, structural, and creative elements that constitute these stylistic differences yields vivid examples of how music and dance contribute to inter- and intra-cultural conversations.

'Maroon' is a term used throughout the African Diaspora to refer to those who managed to escape plantation slavery, as well as their descendants. In Suriname, escape efforts were uncommonly successful, resulting in the formation of six quasi-autonomous societies in the interior regions of Suriname and neighboring French Guyana. Due to the unique circumstances under which

[1] Tradition and culture are two terms with borders that are inherently hazy, yet their invocation in relation to the genres and the groups I worked with make them important symbolic components to this study. Some practices and genres discussed as traditional have developed relatively recently (the naissance of the genre *aleke*, for instance, emerged in the late 1950's and early 1960's), while others, including *awasa* and *bandammba*, have been practiced for many more generations. I use the terms 'tradition' and 'culture' in accordance with the discourse in which I encountered them—to describe phenomena that was transmitted and discussed as belonging to Maroon cultural heritage.

these societies developed—their relative freedom of expression outside the plantation system, coupled with the isolated location of their settlements—their cultural ties to West Africa are considered particularly strong.

I chose to conduct research among Maroons living in Paramaribo in order to learn how traditional performance arts are transmitted and maintained at a distance from the land and village environment with which they are so deeply associated. This proved an ideal frame through which to examine processes of personalization, owing to the wide variety of Maroon and non-Maroon audiences for which these groups perform, and given that spaces and opportunities for practice and performance must be deliberately constructed within Paramaribo's multicultural cityscape. A large portion of the Surinamese Maroon population lives and works in urban centers, yet the most widely circulating images and portrayals of this population are overwhelmingly rural, often depicting a society at odds with modern technologies and ideas. I aim to follow the example set by Kenneth Bilby (2000) and Thomas Polimé (van Stipriaan and Polimé 2009), whose work counteracts the prevailing stereotypes of the Maroons as an isolated people by recognizing contemporary Maroons' participation in multiple social and cultural spheres.

While it is easy to dismiss as insignificant the ways in which group members position themselves within a performance space, whether or not they warm up before launching into a performance, or the order in which a group presents various dance genres, I argue that it is through the accumulation of such apparent minutiae that groups attain their own distinctive character.

## Maroon Cosmopolitanism and Cultural Authenticity

The extraordinary historical legacy of the Maroons is a means of present and future involvement in international routes of circulation, particularly within the African Diaspora. The

social currency of their cultural legacy as freedom fighters effectively joins the past and a feeling of historicity with a sense of contemporary cultural viability, global social involvement and, by extension, cosmopolitanism.[2] These are ideal conditions for folkloric practice, in which the creative combination and juxtaposition of cultural and cosmopolitan significations can be used to convey a variety of messages about personhood, and to fortify multiple spheres of social connection. By investigating and investing in their cultural specificity, the members of Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba are involved in shaping national and diasporic dialogues, and also using these dialogues as a tool for identity construction.

The benefits of deepening their knowledge of various performance forms and sharing them with diverse audiences coincide with financial compensation, national and international travel, and public exposure through local and international media. I argue that the features of this exchange— the circumstances under which performers deploy their energy and skill and what they get in return for their efforts— are an important part of the identity formation processes in which group members are involved. Likewise, by hiring a cultural performance group to perform for a Maroon audience, Maroon patrons exercise a manner of cultural consumption that likewise situates them as cosmopolitan social practitioners.[3] An ethnographic study of Maroon performance traditions, then, is not exclusively comprised of the content and practices that are so categorized, but also of the conditions to which these traditions are often a response, and from which their social meaning can be derived.

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[2] My understanding of cosmopolitanism is informed by Thomas Turino, who uses the term "To refer to objects, ideas, and cultural positions that are widely diffused throughout the world and yet are specific only to certain portions of the populations within given countries." Turino stresses that cosmopolitanism is manifested differently in each locality, yet is connected by different forms of media, contact, and interchanges that are not necessarily linked by geographic proximity (Turino 2000: 8).

[3] In Chapter 6 of Christopher Alan Waterman's *Jùjú: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music* (1990), Waterman outlines the importance of social and transactional exchanges made possible through performance. I find that a similar potential for Maroon patrons and event guests to assert and affirm their status and their affiliations within their community is activated through their roles as patrons and hosts. As discussed in Chapter 4, the choice of which of the several active groups they hire likewise reflects a patron's social networks and loyalties within Paramaribo.

Yet, the degree to which cultural groups like Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba have a command over traditional performance practice, and a right to act as Maroon cultural representatives, is an issue of contention. During fieldwork, when explaining to people that I was studying Maroon dance as performed by formal cultural groups, I was often told that, while such performances can be entertaining, if I want to study the 'real thing,' I have to go to the villages in the rainforest interior. People have good reasons for saying so. Maroons and non-Maroons alike recognize that, in general, ties to Maroon tradition are most strongly held by those living in the dense forest of Suriname and neighboring French Guyana. It is there that the most important rituals are held, and while younger generations frequently traverse between the coast and interior, knowledgeable elders are more likely to reside in the villages year round.

In light of the general belief in the cultural primacy of the interior, performances like the ones I studied risk being discredited before a word is sung or a drum hit by virtue of the fact that they are created in the city by people who live in the city, and whose degree of inculcation in Maroon customs and cultural forms therefore cannot be inferred by location alone. Furthermore, these groups all develop new modes of performance to suit the proscenium stage and audiences of diverse backgrounds. These adaptations, combined with changing social and creative objectives, make it difficult at times to appraise performers' expertise or a show's success.

Of course, there are plenty of instances that challenge a geographical mapping of expertise—life experiences and practices are seldom that stationary or so easily partitioned. One man, after telling me at length about the shallow cultural base of city groups, then suggested I refer to *I Greet the New* Day, a CD produced by Maroon scholar André Pakosie (Pakosie 2002a), which included tracks performed by Irma Dabenta, a lead singer in Kifoko. In this instance, the same performer was involved in performances at either end of this man's spectrum of cultural integrity. In fact, the song

Dabenta performed on Pakosie's CD would not have been out of place at one of Kifoko's rehearsals.

Among the people I met when I traveled inland were talented artists who would not perform outside of a church context, and others who belonged to formal groups much like Kifoko, Saisa, or Fiamba, yet were located in remote areas including Stoelman's Island and Maripasoula. Surely they, too, were engaged in adaptations that were comparable (or of a comparable degree) to those of their urban counterparts. Further, as I discuss in Chapter 4, drawing a strict division between urban and rural ignores that there are several Maroon areas that are, arguably, neither one nor the other.

More to the point, Paramaribo *is* the context for thousands of Maroons of diverse backgrounds who feel that they participating in Maroon culture, and who could rightfully disagree? To members of Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba and to urban Maroon audiences, their performances are intensely 'real,' providing an important point of differentiation between themselves and other groups in the city.[4] Ultimately, the social realities that these groups help to construct are my primary interest in this study. I recognize, as did the members of the groups, that their knowledge and expertise is far from exhaustive. Although I do document and analyze the performance forms these groups practiced—most thoroughly in Chapter 6—my focus is less on the performance styles as practiced by a society than it is a study of how individuals assert a particular place in society through the practice, adaptation, and presentation of traditional forms. Their position of (perceived) cultural marginality is a prominent ingredient in the associative play of practice and performance, even in situations when they are performing as cultural representatives.

## Personalizing Tradition

[4] These can include differentiations within the Maroon population as well as between Maroons and other populations.

Early on in my research, my advisor, Ingrid Monson, challenged my developing ideas about personalizing tradition by asking, aren't all traditions personal? Don't all cultural practices acquire individualized meanings and significance by the people who perform them? Isn't this the same idea Tomie Hahn presents in her ethnography, *Sensational Knowledge*, when she recounts her *nihon buyo* teacher's instruction, "'Do not just imitate me. That's boring. Learn the dance and then dance it with [Tomie]'s heart (Hahn 2007, 49)"'? Certainly, I am talking about a related idea, and the ubiquity of this phenomenon further convinces me of its relevance as a topic of study. Yet in personalizing tradition, I am concerned with the structural and socially mobilizing components of the personal practices of ubiquitous cultural forms. During fieldwork, many of the Maroons I talked to discussed "keeping your culture"[5] as a social imperative. My emphasis on personalizing tradition is, in essence, an investigation into what is involved in this practice of 'keeping,' and how the methods of keeping both reflect and construct the identity of the keeper. Here I ask, by what processes are the sounds and movements of performance forms absorbed into people's physical vocabularies and, once thus incorporated, how is identity affirmed or challenged through the triangulation between the performed material, the performer, and the context of performance?

Playing the Changes, Aspect Change, and Perceptual Agency—'Shift' as Message and Method

In many ways, the concept of personalizing tradition and my methodological approach—extended ethnographic study of three groups—both focus on consistencies in social and creative engagement that show up through practice. Yet these consistencies appear in counterpoint with highly variable social circumstances and ever-changing interpretive frames. Much of the satisfaction that group members and audiences derive from Maroon performance forms comes from the

[5] This sentiment was expressed to me both in English and in the Okanisi language—"Kibi i culturu."

strategic combination of elements of continuity and change, a poetic process that I relate to the notion of 'playing the changes.'

Playing the changes in a jazz context refers to a performed understanding of the chord changes that support a soloist, through which the performer's creative and expressive potential can be realized. The poeticism and expressive power of a performance is heightened by the performer's demonstrated awareness of the musical context. In looking at changes in social context—in venue and audience, in the interests and desires of the performers themselves over time—I view the activities of the members of Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba, both formal and informal, as a practice through which command of one's circumstances is both represented and realized, yet those circumstances are understood and appreciated as temporary. Performers claim space, refigure people's understandings of one another's creative potential and of their relationships to each other, invoke continued knowledge and traditional practices alongside innovations from myriad sources, all with the understanding that change is constant. The ability to adapt and anticipate marks the difference between being able to play the changes, rather than being played by them.

In an effort to create interpretive frames that do justice to the dynamism of the social and creative circumstances of my subject of study, many of my key points involve the consideration of multiple social or performative functions that are embedded in the same situation. Hence, in personalizing tradition, I discuss tradition as both the thing that is personalized and an avenue through which individuation is achieved. In Chapter 5, I explore elements of Fiamba's practice using similar frameworks, first by locating their practices of musical quotation as a means by which popular sources are traditionalized and traditional sources are popularized, and secondly by considering ethnic cultural practice as a means of involvement in city culture, and vice versa. Dance is an ideal form in which to engage in this kind of interpretive play because, as noted in Chapter 3,

the dancer's body is both the "doer" and the "thing done." In these examples, shifting perspective is not merely an analytical trick, it is fundamental to the message I am trying to convey—that these ideas and phenomena are often as codependent as are positive and negative space in a picture.

Indeed, Ludwig Wittgenstein relied on visual examples to elucidate just this kind of perceptual phenomenon, which he described in terms of multiple 'aspects' (Wittgenstein: 1953, 1958). He demonstrated his point using Joseph Jastow's illustration of a duck-rabbit—an image that could be interpreted as either animal, depending on where the viewer places his or her focus. Thus, the image has both a duck aspect and a rabbit aspect; Wittgenstein labeled the act of switching from one interpretation to another 'aspect change,' whereas the moment of realization that another aspect exists was termed 'aspect dawning.'

That some varieties of music invite the same perceptual exercise has not gone without notice, particularly among scholars of African musics. Taking examples from her work with Malian balafonist, Neba Solo, Ingrid Monson outlines the concept of perceptual agency, which she defines as, "The conscious focusing of sensory attention that can yield differing experiences of the same event (Mosnon 2008, S37)."[6] Paul Berliner referred to a related listening practice at work in Zimbabwean mbira music, writing, "The complexity of patterns which mbira music presents to the ear approcimates to what a 'kaleidoscope' presents to the eye. Different 'tunes' can be heard in the music even when the musician does not introduce new variations into his playing."[7] Likewise, David Locke comments on the importance and satisfaction of such perceptual shifts in an Anlo Ewe drumming ensemble (Locke: 1998, 7). The musical underpinnings of the genres I discuss here do not exhibit the kind of structural ambiguity, either in rhythm or melody, to which Monson, Locke,

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[6] Monson clarifies, "By agency I mean 'the socioculturally mediated capacity to act,' and I refrain from confusing it with simple free will or resistance (Monson 2008 S37)."

[7] Berliner's idea and imagery were developed in dialogue with previous work by Gerhard Kubick and Andrew Tracey. (Berliner, undated project report.)

and Berliner refer. Rather I find that this kind of perceptual play is a useful analytical practice in ethnography as well, making it possible to honor the multiple and interrelated dimensions of social performances. Incorporating perceptual agency as a research methodology has the added benefit of acknowledging that interpretation and analysis uncover aspects of the scenarios they aim to describe, rather than ultimate truths.

Methodology

I visited Suriname and French Guyana for the first time in the summer of 2006, and in the five years that followed I conducted roughly 24 months of fieldwork in the region. My involvement during my primary dissertation term (June 2008-December 2009) consisted formal and informal interviews and conversations with group members and other individuals involved with cultural promotion and production. I attended and participated in the regular rehearsals of Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba, and went to numerable performances in the capacity of a research affiliate, a 'friend' of the group, or as a fellow performer and group member. To supplement the knowledge of the percussive traditions that I experienced in rehearsal and performance as a dancer, I took drumming lessons with Clifton Asongo from Fiamba, as well as Ernie Wolf, who specialized in Maroon and Creole ritual percussion music.

Since my preliminary research in 2006, I have made intermittent trips into the interior territories of Suriname and French Guyana—most often to villages along the Suriname-French Guyana border—both during large-scale ceremonies and under more mundane circumstances, when social life was following its expected daily and seasonal rhythms. These trips were of relatively short duration (usually between four days and two weeks at a time), but they provided a useful point of comparison to the life practices of Maroons in urban areas, with which I was more familiar.

My initial exposure to and engagement in Maroon performance traditions was facilitated through several months of research working exclusively with Kifoko. During this beginning stage of

fieldwork, I realized, on some broad level, that other performance groups would exhibit differences in their routines, both public and private. Nonetheless, the experience of some of these differences through my later involvement with Saisa and Fiamba was striking. The comparative approach I adopt in this dissertation emerged during fieldwork as I attempted to make sense of the dramatically different characters of these three groups, both in terms of sociality and creative practice; it is not a strategy that was tied to a central research question from the outset.

Three comparative studies have informed my research frame and mode of presentation: Jocelyne Guilbault's *Zouk: World Music in the West Indies* (1993), Linda Dégh's *American Folklore and the Mass Media* (1994), and Judith Vander's *Songprints: The Musical Experience of Five Shoshone Women* (1996). Structurally, this study most resembles *Zouk*. Like Guilbault, I am concerned with the way that multiple groups respond to the same phenomenon (in this case, performance of culturally emblematic Maroon dance genres, including *awasa*, *songe*, and *bandammba*), however I engage in comparison within a smaller geographic radius, addressing a specific kind of performance ('cultural groups' operating within Paramaribo). Given that I compare groups that are generally thought to belong to the same category, my research can be considered a study of variants. I agree with Linda Dégh's statement that, "Dealing with modern society—mass society—in rapid transformation, we must realize that the variant and variability are the key signs of life, securing the continuity of tradition and absorbing the shock of inevitable change (Dégh 1994, 32)." Finally, I found Judith Vander's *Songprints* influential for the ways she combines the intensely personalized song repertoires and performance histories of five women, using them to generate a compelling portrait of Shoshone music making over the span of roughly a century.

Working with three performance groups enriched my study considerably, but at the same time it made relations with each group more complex. My comparative focus limited the degree to which I could affiliate myself with any one group. I made it a point to adapt to the aesthetic modes

of presentation of each group, without reporting information learnt within one group to any others, or otherwise trying to influence performance aesthetics. Even so, retaining multiple group affiliations was a significant divergence from standard group behavior,[8] sometimes leading group members to express suspicions and mistrust of my motivations or the degree to which I would have a group's interests at heart.

Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba were all extremely generous in letting me participate in group activities. Although I expressed my interest and eagerness to get involved, I deferred to group leaders in determining the extent and character of my participation within each group.[9] Some factors that I imagine played a part in each group's decisions regarding my place within their association include the following:

- My age. At 27-28 years old, I was the oldest participant in Fiamba, in the upper-mid age range of Saisa, and in the middle range of Kifoko's membership.
- My education and training. My affiliation with Harvard University and prior experience with Western and Ghanaian music and dance forms were known by all groups.
- My level of competence with the performance styles and leaders' assessments thereof.
- My engagement/familiarity with other dimensions of Maroon culture, including passable comprehension of the Okanisi language.
- My ethnicity/appearance. In performances and rehearsals, I was the only participant with light skin. (With my Irish and Scottish ancestry, my very light complexion made a stark contrast with the dark skin tones characteristic of the Maroons.)

This last point proved the most striking marker of difference and warrants some discussion. In some situations, particularly in performances with Saisa and Fiamba, I was aware that my participation generated curiosity within the Maroon communities and the broader public. This heightened level of interest was interpreted and used by each group in a different way. After

[8] Such a situation was rare, but not entirely without precedent. For instance Fiamba founder Louise Wondel was, for a period of time, simultaneously affiliated with performance groups Kifangu and Maswa, both of which have since disbanded.

[9] See Chart, Appendix A.

participating in the Avond Vierdagse parade, Fiamba leader Clifton Asongo made frequent mention of how he took my participation, and also the well-intentioned dancing efforts of non-Maroon spectators, as a sign that Maroon culture was gaining broader acceptance. My participation in Saisa became a way in which the group could further distinguish themselves from the performance group Tangiba at a moment when they were particularly keen to do so. Kifoko seemed more reticent to include me in their presentations. While I think this had to do with a host of considerations, I believe it was affected by my appearance in that Kifoko performed more frequently than the other groups in a representational versus a presentational capacity. If audiences were expecting a performance of 'real Maroons' performing their own cultural forms, my participation would have defied their expectations.

In two of the four Kifoko performances in which I took part, I was marked as different through my performance role and through various 'props.' In the Kourou Carnival in Kourou, French Guyana, I paraded with other members, but with my camera and Kifoko's camera strapped on. I alternated between walking and dancing with the other group members and 'performing' my role as ethnographer, videotaping the event from its midst. At the Rainforest Arts festival in Paramaribo, I was stationed at the corner of the stage, perched on a stool with a pen and notepad, 'performing' taking notes of the events. At a certain point during the course of the performance, leader Eddie Lante acted as though he had just noticed me, and asked me (in Okanisi) what I was doing. Then he announced that I was learning too much. I should stop writing and join the group.

My involvement in each group was, for these reasons and others, somewhat exceptional. Yet each individual's role in a group was mediated by a set of social factors, including many of those that influenced the character of my involvement. The role(s) each new performer assumes in one group or another has to do with his or her ability and initiative, but it is also molded by the group's interpretation of how that individual fits into the already-established image of the collective.

**Literature Review**

Regional Scholarship

Researching performance art in Suriname is a rather lonely academic field, yet for a country that has received little scholarly attention, the contributions to the social sciences in general have been significant. Below I outline the scholarship that has been most relevant and influential to my research.

Written over seventy years ago, Melville and Frances Herskovits' *Suriname Folk-Lore* (1936) remains one of the most frequently cited works on Suriname's Afro-Surinamese populations. This book is in essence a survey of facets of Afro-Surinamese culture, both Maroon and Creole. It includes descriptions of a variety of performance events, as well as a substantial section containing musical analysis and song transcriptions, provided by composer and ethnomusicologist Mieczyslaw Kolinski.

Of contemporary anthropologists working in the region, Richard and Sally Price have been the most prolific. Their work on the Maroons—the Saramaka subgroup in particular—spans a wide range of subject matter. Both authors have been experimental in their use of writing formats in works including *Alabi's World* (1990), *Equatoria* (1992), and *First-Time* (1983), in order to make their interpretive decisions more transparent and to distinguish their informants' thoughts and opinions from their own.[10] Generally speaking, Richard Price specializes in historical aspects of Maroon culture and society, while Sally Price's research often concerns Maroon expressive arts (particularly visual arts) as well as issues of gender.[11] Like the Herskovitses before them, the Prices have

[10] These innovations include using different page layouts, illustrations, and fonts to convey multiple perspectives simultaneously. R. Price's *First-Time* is a particularly striking example, in which he gives translated stories on the top half of every page, and his interpretations and commentary on the significance of the passage in the bottom half. He recommends his readers read the top portion first, followed by the bottom portion, only to return and re-read the top section.

[11] Sally Price and Diane Vernon are among the few who have worked to direct attention to Maroon women's social realities.

recognized the central place that music occupies in Maroon social life.[12] For the transcriptions, they have enlisted the help of ethnomusicologist Kenneth Bilby, himself an active scholar of Maroon music, language, and culture.[13]

Bilby's research is among the most extensive resources on Maroon musical styles and practices. Although Bilby is well versed in a variety of musical forms, most of his work in Suriname and French Guyana addresses themes of modernization and different conceptualizations of cultural roots in Afro-Surinamese popular music, particularly in *aleke*, *kaseko*, and *reggae* bands (Bilby 1996, 1999, 2000, 2001). Maroon scholar André Pakosie and Kifoko founder André Mosis have both made important contributions to the study of the performing arts, particularly concerning the *apinti* drumming language. Rivke Jaffe and Jolien Sanderse's recent article on urban Maroon popular musicians' use of Reggae and Dancehall sounds and imagery to counteract pejorative Maroon stereotypes takes as its focus many issues that are particularly germane to this study.[14]

Groups like Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba grapple with many of the issues that Bilby and Jaffe and Sanderse address in a popular music sphere. They, too, confront stereotypes and use traditional source material in producing new styles and social statements. Their performances differ from those of higher profile, popular music groups in that the circumstances and significations of performance vary so dramatically. Educational, ambassadorial, social, and talent/spectacle-driven aspects of their performances are foregrounded or backgrounded to suit the needs of events ranging from birthday

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[12] Other musical sources that address Maroon performance include: Gilbert (1940) Wetalk (1990), and de Bruin and Lie A Ling (1992).

[13] Both Bilby and the Prices have produced CD's, based on their field recordings. See Bilby (2010) and Price and Price (1977).

[14] Also of note is the work of Terry Agerkop, Marcel Wetalk, and Will G. Gilbert. Gilbert published a short report of his musical findings among the Creole and Maroon ("Bush Negro") populations in the 1940's. Ethnomusicologist Terry Agerkop has published relatively little of his research from his years spent in Suriname, but his influence continues to resonate in the works of his understudies from his term as director of Suriname's Department of Culture Studies, including Hillary de Bruin and André Mosis. Marcel Wetalk provides a useful (but dated) overview of Suriname's musical diversity.

parties and funerary rites within the Maroon community to tourist demonstrations and celebrations of national holidays. The groups' greatest constant is that, throughout these changes, their presentations are developed, performed, and interpreted with an emphasis on tradition.

Few scholars have touched on topics of dance. Sally and Richard Price devote most of Chapter 7 ("Playing") in *Maroon Arts* (1999) to the performance arts, including dance. They make additional mention of the representational performance of dance in *On the Mall* (1994). These brief examples shed some light on the vibrancy of dance as a cultural and social practice, but they provide only a passing glimpse, without sustained discussion of performance practice. Yvonne Daniel conducted research in Suriname for a brief period in the 1980's, witnessing both Maroon and Creole dance forms of various sorts. She has included Suriname in various classificatory schema presented in her 2011 publication, *Caribbean and Atlantic Diaspora Dance: Igniting Citizenship*. Trudi Martinus-Guda's work, *Drie Eeuwen Banya: De geschiedenis van een Surinaamse Slavendans* (2005) is, to my knowledge, the first publication to take an Afro-Surinamese dance form as the topic of a book-length publication. Blending historical research and ethnography, she traces the intersecting social and performative developments of the *banya* dance genre across ethnic lines, putting the Creole and Matawai Maroon versions of the same dance form into dialogue. Included in the volume are song texts and musical transcriptions, provided by the current head of Suriname's Department of Culture Studies, Hillary de Bruin.

**Suriname in African Diasporic Context**

Several of the above scholars have also conducted research that implicates Afro-Atlantic cultures more broadly. Melville Herskovits made a tremendous impact on the ways that African-American research is studied through his concept of 'retentions' among the African diasporic populations, a concept he developed after conducting fieldwork in Suriname in the 1920's

(Herskovits 1941)[15]. Reacting against the pervasive opinion of the times that African descendants in the New World had no cultural foundation in the traditions of Africa, Herskovits claimed that many practices had survived the middle passage and continued to have a place in the lives of African communities in the Americas. The expressive arts, religious structures and kinship systems of the Maroons all supported his argument.[16] The ideas Herskovits put forth in *The Myth of the Negro Past* were groundbreaking at the time of their publication, and they have contributed substantially to the foundation of African American scholarship.

Richard Price has also published several works that help further a historical basis for conversations about Africans in the Americas. He and Sidney W. Mintz co-authored *The Birth of African-American Culture*, which addresses ideas of creolization and how slaves managed to foster a culturally based sense of self under the regime of colonial slavery. Price's 1979 edited volume, *Maroon Societies*, addresses many of the social, cultural, and historical attributes that distinguish Maroon communities from other Afro-Atlantic societies.

As with Richard Price, Kenneth Bilby has taken an interest in the documentation and continuing social relevance of oral histories, and also pan-Maroon connections throughout the Black Atlantic.[17] His most recent book, *True-Born Maroons*, is a historical study in which he calls attention to events in Jamaican history as understood by their Maroon populations. By situating these

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[15] This was Melville Herskovits' first fieldwork outside the continental U.S. His wife, Frances, went on both the 1928 and 1929 expeditions, and her research formed an important part of their co-authored book, *Suriname Folk-Lore*. No doubt, her research and council continued to be instrumental in Melville Herskovits' later work.

[16] Richard and Sally Price have contributed important insights into the Herskovits' research experiences (primarily among the Saramaka) and findings in their book, *Root of Roots* (2003), based on a close reading of their field diaries from both visits to Suriname. The Prices point out many specific instances in which the connections made between aspects of Businengee culture and traditions from specific communities in West Africa appear tenuous at best. However, the existence of strong similarities between New World and Continental African cultures remains uncontested for many reasons. For a discussion of the conditions that may have led to such strong ties to African cultures, see the introduction of Richard Price's edited volume, *Maroon Societies* (1979).

[17] Here I refer to Paul Gilroy's influential conceptualization the African community dispersed throughout Europe, the Americas, and the Caribbean. While recognizing that crucial differentiations exist within this collectivity, Gilroy contends that they are nonetheless linked by a series of social, cultural, and historical factors that demand acknowledgement and scholarly consideration. (Gilroy 1993.)

interpretations in the country's current social climate, Bilby highlights the social and political significance of these different versions of history. In his article, "Swearing by the Past, Swearing to the Future: Sacred Oaths, Alliances, and Treaties among Guianese and Jamaican Maroons" (1997), he argues for the continued acknowledgement of the rights secured by Maroon communities in both Jamaica and Suriname through their peace treaties signed by the British and Dutch, respectively.

One distinctive aspect of this present study is the amount of emphasis I place on practice and process. The ways by which participants' modes of engagement with tradition serve to tailor general practices to suit individual needs and ambitions. Music and dance forms like those described here not only accommodate stylized movements and acts that demonstrate a personal flair, the structure of the social phenomena themselves are plastic; they mold to different spaces, they can help propel people into international dialogue or affirm bonds between members of a local community. The chapters to follow demonstrate that the ease with which each of these groups can be utilized to fulfill specific roles is developed through features of group membership and the ideas and performance stylizations that are built into their weekly practice.

Counteracting Gender Bias

Sa Wowi. Norma Sante. Louise Wondel. Sacanada. Zus Mien. These are important artists and innovators, well known among Maroons in Suriname, French Guyana, and the Netherlands. They are not marginal figures. They are among the women whose public contributions as solo performing artists and headlining musicians escape mention in scholarly publications addressing Maroon performance culture, contributing to the false impression that performance art is either practiced as a male form, or as a collective activity undertaken by an undifferentiated mass of

participants, including women.[18] In recent years, there has been a surge in the amount of public exposure women performers have garnered, making their absence in academic literature even more pronounced.[19]

Beyond the contributions of individual performers, a more in-depth discussion of how popularity is attained and what makes a performance successful would make clear the female population's centrality as audience members and consumers in shaping the aesthetic contours of Maroon performance of all kinds. From staged popular music settings to *awasa* music and dance, participatory roles as both performers and spectators are highly gendered. The social play among and between the sexes in performance settings is a rich source of wit and social commentary that remains largely untapped.

An emphasis on the *apinti* drumming language (an almost exclusively male domain), the male-dominated genres of *reggae* and *kaseko*, and a strong proclivity for text-based analysis have all contributed to the gender divide. Many skills that are utilized by both men and women have received comparatively little notice, including a singer's creative manipulation of the tone and texture of his or her voice, a performer's ability to engage and enliven an audience, and dancers' or musicians' ability get people participating. Such qualities are among contemporary performers' biggest assets.

These values—which women have a great deal of power in determining—are still sites of contested academic importance. The problem, as I see it, is not that there is any lack of interesting things to say about these more abstract, body-centered issues or ways to theorize them; the problem

[18] An important exception to this trend is the periodical, Siboga, edited by André Pakosie, in which a more accurate picture of a cultural sphere that is influenced by both male and female creative artists.

[19] A parallel rise in popularity and exposure is occurring with the Creole population, where singers including dancehall singer 'Jo-Ann' and jazz musician and singer/songwriter Ke-lita Gallant. Norma Sante and Jo-Ann have been successful in appealing to both Maroon and Creole audiences alike.

is that these involve creating new methodologies, descriptive resources, modes of questioning, and a fresh interrogation of the ethics of representation.[20]

While this study does not linger extensively on gendered elements of performance, *awasa* groups like the ones studied here are important creative outlets for women. As I argue in Chapter 5, these groups have helped ready a number of women and men to take on more high-profile, soloistic roles as performers. Through this dissertation, I aim to provide a more gender balanced account of performance practices among Maroons, and I make a deliberate effort to highlight some of the women whose contributions and innovations have, up to now, eluded scholarly recognition.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2 provides contextual information for this study. I begin with a general overview of Suriname's political history, with attention paid to the creation of the nation's distinctive multicultural mix, and to the historical events and processes that are of particular significance to Maroon society. I outline several basic features of Maroon social organization, including traditional forms of leadership and jurisdiction, characteristics of a Maroon cosmology, gender relations, and creative outlets. The chapter closes with an introduction to Paramaribo, the fieldsite for this study. I explore the ways through which the joined processes of multiculturalism and discrimination shape the city's social landscape, and conclude by bringing attention to the places and events for which groups like Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba most often perform.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are "profile chapters", each devoted to the discussion of a specific group. These three chapters serve dual functions—first, they provide the descriptive base that, taken as a whole, underscores the main point of the dissertation—namely that the accumulated differences

[20] I do not mean to suggest that embodiment is the exclusive purview of women. Rather, I feel a focus on the assets that I site as being shared between men and women, which are more embodied in nature, would help to produce opportunities for the discussion and acknowledgement of the performance issues and contributions of both genders.

in groups' histories, social and performance practices, and circulations within physical and social space result in distinctive experiences and uses of tradition. Involvement in such collectives can play a powerful role in constructions of self and/in community. To aid in drawing together the various comparative strands, I bracket these chapters with an introductory and concluding section.

The chapters' second function is to explore specific conceptual and theoretical dimensions of the practice and social implications of personalizing tradition. I do not intend to suggest that these issues are exclusive to any one particular group—for instance, while I dwell on the methodological importance of considering performance groups' rehearsal activities in relation to Kifoko, this is certainly not the only group for which that holds true. Rather, my studies with Kifoko helped to make a particularly coherent argument that can be best delivered using the social constants of that particular group, including membership and location.

In Chapter 3, I consider how Kifoko performers practice and present a range of social positions simultaneously. While Maroon culture and tradition might be foregrounded as Kifoko's main object of study or presentation, it is manifested through its connection with the ideologies and aesthetics of professionalism, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism. I use this chapter to argue the benefits of looking beyond the public, staged productions of performance collectives when considering their ultimate aims and social contributions. I close the chapter by putting the ideologically saturated physical practices of Kifoko in dialogue with contemporary scholarship on embodiment. Drawing on Dorinne Kondo's *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace* (1990) and Michael Herzfeld's *The Body Impolitic: Artisans and Artifice in the Global Hierarchy of Value* (2004), I interpret Kifoko's practices as a way in which craftsmanship is linked to the construction of ideas about the self in the world. I put Kondo and Herzfeld's rich ethnographic accounts in dialogue with Ann Cooper Albright's essay, "Technobodies" (Albright 1997), in which

she addresses the particular phenomenon of the body being both the worker and the physical manifestation of the work.

Whereas, in Chapter 3, I consider ways in which Kifoko's presentations of tradition were *mediated* by their complicity in other social and ideological dialogues, in Chapter 4, I consider three of Saisa's routines that make non-Maroon referents a *point of focus*—an explicit part of the performed content. I contend that by not limiting the performed content to material that registers as distinctly Maroon, participation and enjoyment of these choreographed routines encourage a different kind of cultural consumption. Making use of what James Scott terms "hidden transcripts" (Scott 1990, 4), these choreographies draw from insider knowledge of the group and its performers, creating performances that are predicated on recognition as much as on the presentation of novelty and difference. Through these choreographies, the diversity of urban Maroons' life practices can become an asset in performance, rather than evidence of estrangement from Maroon stereotypes and unequivocal markers of cultural 'authenticity.'

In Chapter 5—the third "profile chapter"—I introduce Fiamba, a group whose pedagogies and modes of presentation and socialization are permeated by its youth demographic. I illustrate how, through practices of quotation and allusion, Fiamba performers engage with the area of overlap between the genre classifications 'popular' and 'traditional'—tradition can be seen as a conduit to popular expression, and likewise popular music and dance styles can bring with them exposure to traditional songs, movement styles, and rhythmic frameworks. My second argument in this chapter involves an analogous relational framework. Using Fiamba's participation in a large-scale, city-wide parade as an example, I argue that, not only can an event create the circumstances under which a tradition can be showcased to a broader audience, sometimes participation in tradition provides a highly valued opportunity for participation in an event, or in an altogether

different mode of cultural practice. I view Fiamba's involvement in the Wandelmars parade as one such incident.

The final chapter of this dissertation departs from the profile chapter model of the previous three. In it, *awasa*, the one performance genre that was featured by all three groups, is outlined in terms of its structural and communicative properties. By granting the sung, percussive, and danced elements of each genre equal analytical weight and focusing on the points of direct dialogue across 'sections,' I promote a practice of integrated analysis. I maintain that an exclusive focus on either music or dance risks bypassing crucial logical, logistical, and creative facets that are shared between the two.

# Chapter 2: Setting the Scene

**October 10, 2009—Day of the Maroons (Celebrated on the anniversary of the signing of the first enduring peace treaty between a group of Suriname Maroons and the Dutch colonial government.[21])**

With the sweat still drying on his performance clothes and fighting the smile that twitches at the corners of his mouth, Mano stands, holding one of Fiamba's rattles as though it was a microphone, waiting for me to begin videotaping. Adjusting his posture and manner of speaking to mirror local TV news journalists, he approaches each of his fellow drummers in turn, asking them a few questions and then requesting of them a short dance performance. Although Mano's acting and comedic abilities have been proven on numerous bus rides to gigs throughout and beyond Paramaribo, I'm still startled that this teenager is able to mimic local television reporters so convincingly. As he slides easily between a humor bordering on parody and more serious shades of conversation and reflection, I marvel at how—on this particular day, as a young drummer talking with his cohort, and with his own particular brand of play and insight—he draws from each drummer thoughts and reflections about Maroon identity. I wonder if Mano realizes the ethnographic gem he is giving me, asking his friends questions that would elicit different responses if delivered in the halting Okanisi of an earnest white female researcher, some ten years their senior. We move from Borsu, perhaps the only member of the group who identifies as Creole, to Errol, one Fiamba's newest members, to whom Mano recently relinquished the role of lead drummer.

[The other boys chuckle as Errol smoothes his clothes and secures a length of plaid cloth—part of Fiamba's performance attire—around his neck, 'primping' in preparation for his interview. Mano points the shaker toward Errol, and then back at himself throughout their exchange, the rattle comically punctuating the back and forth of their conversation.]

M: Stylish brother, what's your name?
E: They call me brother Errol.
M: Errol, do you feel that today is 10 October? How do you see it?
E: Well, for me—I don't know if other people feel like I feel…
M: Yes
E: …I feel that truly I am a…true-true child of Africa. Black, Black African, short hair.[22]
M: OK!
E: Yes, a free man's child.
M: Uh, the day they call 10 October, you celebrate it [pauses to rephrase]…do you feel that everything is how it should be?

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[21] The treaty was signed between the Dutch and the Ndyuka subgroup. Note that the following events took place two years before the day was first celebrated as an official holiday. Details on the various treaties are given later in this chapter.

[22] André Mosis recounts learning from Da Yeki that, in the time of slavery, those of African descent were the only population to keep their hair short. People use the phrase 'short haired' to refer to those who not only are of African descent, but who also foster a connection to Africa through their daily lives and social perspective. Mosis glossed the meaning as being comparable to being "Black and proud."

E: Well, so long as it's here to feel [observe], then you must feel [observe] it, if you are one true-true Okanisi Busikondeesama.
M: OK, you say it well. You say Okanisi—how do you feel to be an Okanisi? How do you feel to be an Okanisi, Black child…OK, a Maroon, even? How do you feel to say you're a Maroon, a free man's child, how do you feel?
E: Well, the feeling…the feeling has to be in [yourself]. Because those…let's say…we don't say it to [make them] feel a [certain] way, but those…who live in the city here—
M: (in agreement) Yah yah yah.
E: Then you know what I'm saying already.
M: Yah yah yah.
E: They won't feel it like you and I will feel it.
M: Yah yah yah
E: But now, I truly feel that yes, freedom's here.
M: Yah Yah
E: Freedom's here
M: Yah yah yah
E: We've come out of slavery, we're not in chains anymore.
M: OK!
E: Yes.
M: Yeah, um…I wanted to ask you something please, brother. If you can tell me the nineteen [the year] when freedom came.
E: Well, the nineteen when freedom came, that was seventeen…sixty.
M: Oh, OK. But, um, you're in Fiamba, too, because I see you're wearing their clothes.
E: Yeah, man. We're in Fiamba.
M: OK, so how long have you been in Fiamba?
E: Well, it hasn't been a year yet, but it's been a good five months.
M: But how do you feel when you and the people in Fiamba go somewhere, if I can ask you?
E: Well, I feel good because I see that, me and them, we're one.
M: Yah yah
E: We're one, one saatu uwii, African people.
M: OK, then I'd like to ask you, what do you play in Fiamba?
E: Well me, in Fiamba I play drum. I play gaan doon [lead drum] in Fiamba—[the dance styles] awasa, aleke…
M: Yah yah yah. It's good. Well, we're going to want to thank you, but first…we won't give our thanks yet because, if you play in an awasa group, you must know the dance. Or if you don't know, you see how they're dancing, you can dance a little please, brother.
E: [feigning modesty] Well, it won't be an impressive dance, but if you say so, we can try to show you something…

And with that, the boys raise a song in comic, affected voices and clap out a beat for Errol to follow. The 'mic' resumes its role as a shaker. After a few seconds of dancing, the other boys cluster around him, cheering 'Baaya ee!' and tackling him with full-bodied hugs, as people often do to congratulate an inspired performance. After dissolving momentarily in laughter, Mano resumes his role as TV journalist and chases after the next drummer, his yellow rattle/mic leading the way…

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In this brief exchange between two group-mates, identity is configured and reconfigured in relation to a variety of social, historical, and geographic points of reference. Mano and Errol switch from conveying lighthearted parody to deeply felt sentiments with surprising quickness, beginning with a comic enactment of a television broadcast, only to transfer seamlessly to the clipped call and response verbal exchange associated with a *kuutu*—the serious talk of Maroon elders—as they touch upon the social and cultural alienation they feel living in the city. These young men prove adept at transcribing characteristic postures and turns of phrase across differences in age, class, and ethnicity, often to comic effect.

Paradoxically, this level of dynamism was among the most constant features in my interactions with Maroons living in Paramaribo; their well-exercised ability to position themselves in relation to a dizzying array of populations, historical phenomena, and cultural products and processes makes the task of providing an overview of contextual information particularly daunting, yet undeniably necessary.

Following a brief discussion of pertinent terminology, the first segment of this chapter orients readers to Suriname, geographically, historically, and politically. Next, I provide a general description of Maroon social structure and life practices that are pertinent to my topic of study. The third and final section of the chapter serves as an introduction to Paramaribo—specifically to the circulatory routes that are frequently engaged by Maroon city residents, the social and cultural activities that fuse Maroon sensibilities with the urban environment, and the challenges Maroons face in navigating this multicultural cityscape.

Names/Terminology

As evidenced by the mock interview between Mano and Errol, there are a wide variety of terms a person can employ in discussing the ethnic group on which this study is based. Each name draws on different associations, and speakers are often deliberate in their word choice. This array of terms, many of which are in some way problematic, warrants some clarification and discussion at the outset.

In contemporary scholarship, the term used most frequently to reference the population I researched is 'Suriname Maroon.' The word 'Maroon' comes from the Spanish '*cimarron'*, which initially referenced feral cattle and was later ascribed to Africans who, once enslaved, managed to escape.[23] Its current usage has been expanded to include the descendants of that population. Despite my own reservations about this term,[24] I use the word 'Maroon' in my own writing, following the recommendations of a number of scholars, both Westerners and individuals of that society, who suggested that to use a relatively unknown term would cause confusion and alienate my own work from the existing body of literature. While these six subgroups comprise the largest existing Maroon population, other Maroon communities developed in a variety of locations, including Colombia, Brazil, and Jamaica. Within the dissertation, I use the term 'Maroons' in reference to the six subgroups founded in Suriname and Western French Guyana, unless otherwise specified.

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[23] Richard Price dates the beginning of the term's usage in relation to slaves as established by the early 1500's (R. Price 1983b, pg. 1 n.1). The Okanisi language equivalent to Maroon is 'Loweman'—Run away man. In my fieldwork, this term was less frequently used in conversation than Businengee or Busikondeesama.

[24] In addition to the obvious discomfort of describing this group of people with a colonial word initially applied to livestock, I find the term 'Suriname Maroon' problematic for the additional reason that, although nearly all of the population arrived first in present-day Suriname, the group includes communities on both sides of the Suriname/ French Guyana border. Among those living in this borderland are many for whom cultural, jurisdictional, and linguistic ties to France predominate over the Dutch and Surinamese connections.

Maroons often refer to themselves using the indigenous terms 'Businengee,' or, less often, 'Busikondeesama,' translated as 'Bush Negro' or 'Bushland People,' respectively. This Anglicized translation, 'Bush Negro' was used by scholars up until roughly the 1970's, before being supplanted by the (presumably) more politically correct term, 'Maroon.' When possible, the majority of Maroons I knew tended to refer to the names of a specific subgroup, rather than by the larger classification of Maroon or Businengee.[25]

Use of the term Ndyuka deserves additional consideration. Although most often used in reference to a specific subgroup, 'Ndyuka' is occasionally used to reference Maroons more generally. Non-Maroons should exercise caution when using the term because, with only a slight inflection of the voice, a speaker can be understood to be using the word in a pejorative sense[26]; further, when using the term in reference to the Maroon population at large, it is open for speculation whether a speaker understands (or cares) that there are in fact six distinct subgroups. While the existing scholarship employs the word Ndyuka (alternately spelled Ndjuka) in reference to a specific subgroup, Paramaribo Maroons who would fit that classification generally preferred to be called by the terms Okanisi, or its Dutch equivalent, Aukaners.[27]

The seemingly simple task of setting forth a basic vocabulary provides but one example of how the ethnic tensions that have shaped Surinamese society are quick to surface, even in the course

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[25] There are a number of situations in which Maroons of different subgroups find it important, at times, to differentiate between one another. Kenneth Bilby provides one example in his study of the tensions between Aluku and Ndyuka Maroons in the 1980's (Bilby 1989, 1990). A treaty with the French in 1860 entitled Alukus to French citizenship, while the Ndyuka had no such agreement. As the process of 'francization' of French Guyana made available to the Aluku new economic and service-oriented resources (for instance schools and hospitals), the cultural distinctions between these two populations became an issue of contention.

[26] A difference in intonation can lead one to interpret the speaker as saying "Dju kka,"—which translates as "Jew shit"—an implied reference to the low status of Afro-Surinamese, many of whom were slaves on plantations operated by Suriname's Portuguese Jewish population. (See "Early Colonization", this chapter, and S. Price [1984] 1993 xxix-xxxi.)

[27] The name 'Aukaner' references a plantation from which many Africans escaped, situated along the Suriname River. My impression is that this preference applies most strongly in interactions with cultural outsiders, 'Ndyuka' being used with more frequency within the Maroon population.

of everyday conversation. Successful social navigation requires not only an awareness of the history of the Maroons, but of the continued and perpetually shifting tensions between themselves and the other populations with which they come into contact. Beyond the words spoken, Maroons pay attention to facial expression, body language, and social context when assessing a speaker's intention. The result, I would argue, is a society that is particularly attuned to the nuance and performative aspects of communication.

Political scientist Anthony DeSales Affigne commented:

> Far from being "dead history," the legacies of colonial slavery and its aftermath, especially the formation of two distinct African-descent populations, with divergent material and cultural interests, are powerful *contemporary* factors in Suriname politics (Affigne 1990, 14).

To confirm Affigne's assertion, one needs look no further than the names used to distinguish one Afro-Surinamese population from the other. The word 'Maroon' constructs an identity that hinges on a population's response to slavery, thereby joining the founders of these groups with their present-day descendants. Whereas their ancestors were designated as Maroons through their escape from slavery and subsequent struggles for survival and autonomy, contemporary Maroons are not classified as such due to their own actions, but rather through the choices made by earlier generations and the cultural distinctions that resulted from that change in circumstances. In some situations, qualities that aided the first generation of Maroons, such as bravery, resourcefulness, and a fierce resistance to domination, function as cultural character traits of sorts—contemporary Maroons can demonstrate a connection (or be accused of lacking such a connection) to their ancestors' legacy through the decisions they make in their own lives and daily struggles. Not only does the term 'Maroon' set up and naturalize a certain relationship to external authority structures, the distinction rests in opposition to Suriname's other Afro-Surinamese population, the Creoles. Indeed, this is in some ways endemic, in that the escape was the moment in which Afro-Surinamese culture diverged into two general pathways.

However, this opposition can be drawn on different levels, depending on the term an individual uses. Whereas the term 'Maroon' differentiates between those who fled slavery and those who stayed, different connections are mobilized when employing the terms Businengee, Busikondeesama, and Bosland Kreolen.[28] These terms formulate difference in relation to place, juxtaposing those who live in the "bush" with the "foto"—the city. Such classifications confirm the central role of place as an ethnic signifier, grounding the Maroons in the interior, the Creoles (locally termed "Fotonengee") in the city.

Basic Facts about Suriname

Covering 163,820 square km (101,703 square miles, roughly the size of Wisconsin),[29] Suriname is South America's smallest independent country. The majority of this land area is comprised of rainforest. Amerindian and Maroon villages dot Suriname's riverways, but vast stretches of virtually uninhabited land lie beyond and between these settlements.[30] A narrow strip of savannah separates the rainforest from the country's more populous northern coastline. This coastal area, occupying a strip roughly 50-100km wide (Groot 2009, 1)— hosts the country's urban areas and cultivated land, interspersed with wetland forest and mangrove swamps. An estimated 75% of the population lives in urban areas along the coast, with more than 50% of Suriname's population living in Paramaribo, the capital city.[31]

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[28] The term Bosland Kreolen was generated by Creole politician Johan Adolf Pengel in the 1960's, in an effort to both get more Maroons involved in governmental elections, and to encourage them to vote for Afro-Surinamese candidates by stressing their shared ethnic and cultural roots. Maroons were first granted the right to vote in these elections in 1963.

[29] CIA World Factbook (Last accessed May 7, 2012.) https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ns.html

[30] As discussed later in this chapter, mining and lumber operations, from small-scale ventures to government-sanctioned contracts with multi-national corporations, are a conspicuous presence in the region, leaving Suriname's Maroon and Amerindian populations struggling to maintain control over the land on which they depend.

[31] CIA Factbook. 2009 Population estimate.

With neighboring Guyana to the West and French Guyana to the East, this region, known collectively as the Guyanas, is systematically omitted from guidebooks and scholarly works in an attempt to paint a cohesive picture of the South American continent. By this rationale, the Guyanas' geographic location is of little consequence, rendering the South American classification a socio-cultural distinction rather than a geographic one.

**Table 1: Population of Suriname (2004 estimate[32])**

| Ethnic group | % of Suriname's total population |
|---|---|
| Hindustani (East Indian) | 37 |
| Creole (mixed with African descent) | 31 |
| Javanese | 15 |
| Maroon | 10 |
| Amerindian | 2 |
| Chinese | 2 |
| White | 1 |
| Other | 2 |
| | **Total Population: 560,157** |

Certainly, as a Dutch-speaking country with a Hindustani majority, Suriname runs counter to many popular impressions of South America, aligning closer, perhaps, with Trinidad's sizeable Hindustani population, or with the Dutch-inflected culture of the Netherlands Antilles. Indeed, all three Guyanas align more closely with the Caribbean, both culturally and economically.[33] Yet although Suriname can argue for a place within South American, Caribbean, and even Latin American discourses, it finds itself on the margins of all three.

## Historical Overview

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[32] CIA World Factbook. 2012 total population estimate, yet the ethnic demographic percentages are based on the 2004 Census.

[33] Suriname and Guyana are both members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). French Guyana's economic ties reflect its status as an overseas department to France. However, due to the existence of several other French departments within the Caribbean (Saint-Maritn, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Saint-Barthélemy), its colonial affiliations can be seen as strengthening the territory's ties to the Caribbean.

*The bus idles on a bridge, stuck in Paramaribo's midday traffic. A Maroon friend sitting next to me points out the window at the canal below us, extending far in either direction. Slaves dug this, he tells me, many of them with their bare hands. The following year we find ourselves stopped in traffic at the same spot, looking out over the same canal. Again he points and tells me, slaves dug this. In a given month he will find himself at this particular intersection countless times. I wonder how many times the circumstances of its construction will surface in his mind, and how many points in the city might trigger similar associations. The landscape of Suriname's coast has been shaped by the work of slaves and indentured servants over more than three centuries. Many individuals make their way through their daily routines in Paramaribo without giving much thought to the conditions under which the landscape has been molded, but for those who hold fast to the importance of remembering slavery's legacy, the city is full of reminders.*

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Early Colonization

When colonists first arrived in Suriname, the region had a variety of native inhabitants. The Carib and Arawak people occupied the coast, while additional groups, including the Trio, Wayana, and Akurio lived along the riverways of the country's interior. Spanish explorers had ventured to Suriname in the early 17th century, yet they were unable to secure a presence in the region. It was not until 1651 that Englishman Francis Wiloughby, Earl of Parham, established the first viable colony. In the Breda Peace Settlement that concluded the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667), the British traded this South American property in exchange for what is now New York City and the surrounding area (Postma 2003, 289).

Suriname experienced an active slave trade from the mid-seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries. Maroons came from a number of slave ports along the West African Coast. Richard Price claims the majority of the Saramaka Maroons came from the Bight of Benin (also known as the Slave Coast) (Price 2011, 9). Most of the slaves brought to Suriname were taken from ports along the Guinea Coast—in particular the Gold Coast—and the Loango Angola Coast of Central Africa (Postma 2003, 297). Suriname's primary crops included sugarcane, coffee, cocoa, and later, cotton.

The First Maroons: Escape from the Plantations and the Maroon Wars

Escape (marronage) occurred throughout the New World colonies, yet the risks involved and the likelihood of failure served to dissuade slaves from such actions, keeping this threat to plantation productivity in check. Slaves knew that, should they be caught, the most severe punishments awaited them, and those punishments meted out in Suriname were particularly gruesome[34]. Beyond fear of recapture, runaways had to find their way through harsh and unfamiliar territory with hardly any resources at their disposal. The first generations of Maroons lived highly instable and nomadic lives, wracked by starvation and preoccupied with matters of protection and survival.

Pushed by the extreme brutality of the planters and aided somewhat by the features of the landscape[35], the escaped slaves of Suriname achieved an unprecedented level of success. From the mid-17th century to the late 18th century, thousands of Maroons fled slavery, establishing six distinct ethnic groups along the riverways of Suriname and French Guyana.[36] These societies of escapees supported themselves by conducting systematic raids, through which plantation property was damaged or destroyed, essential goods obtained, and additional slaves carried off.

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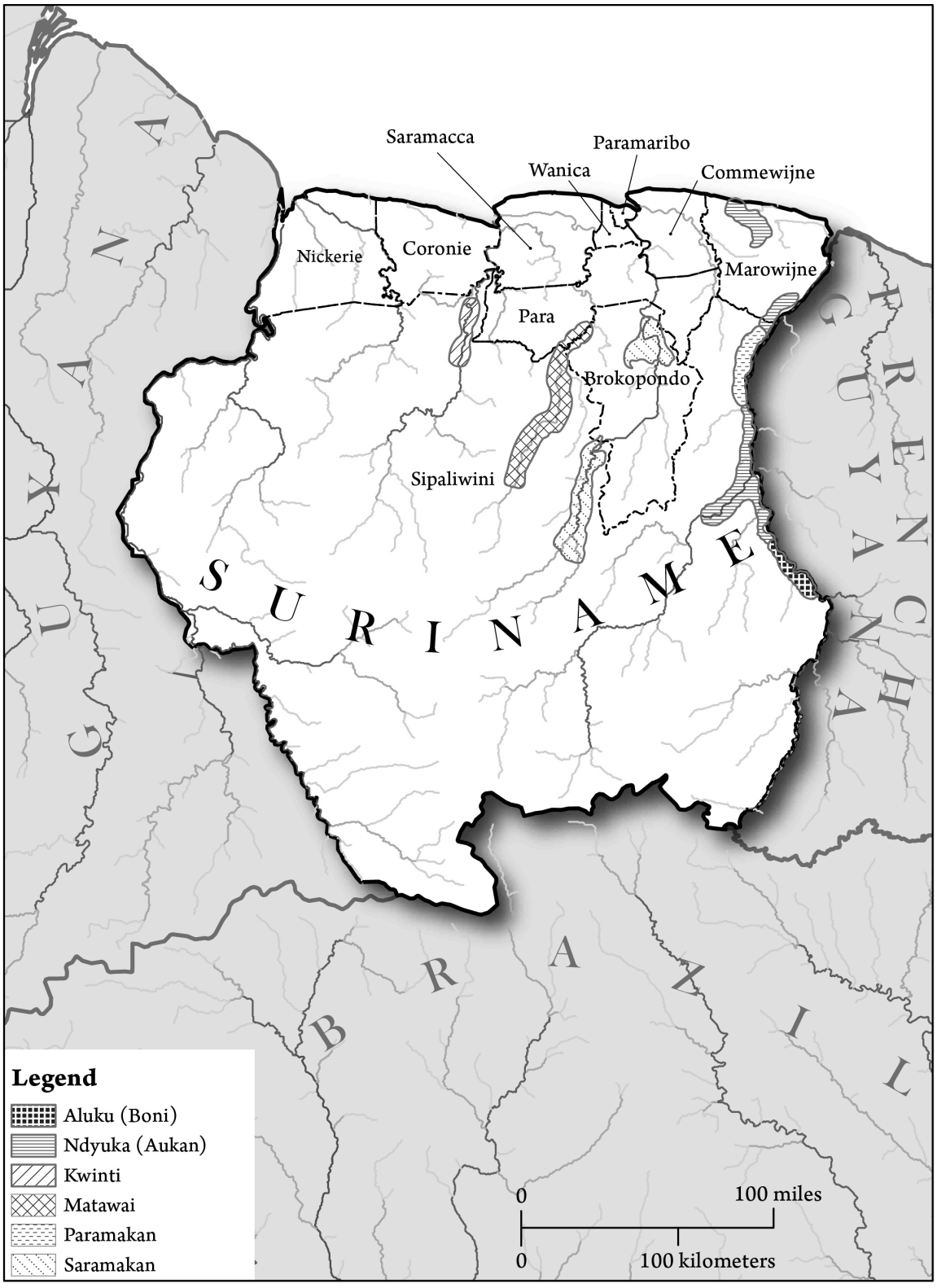
[34] Wim Hoogbergen reports that, for those recaptured slaves who were sent to Paramaribo for trial, the offense was most often punishable by death (Hoogbergen 1990, 5). Because each slave who was turned over to the authorities diminished a planter's work force, planters often preferred to devise their own methods of punishment. Hamstringing (severing a slave's Achilles tendon) was a popular punishment for a first offense; other barbaric punishments employed by these Dutch slaveowners included being hung alive with an iron hook through the ribs, or being roasted alive. (Price and Price: Stedman's Surinam, xii, 53). Some of the most vivid extant descriptions of such punishments appear in John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative of an Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796). William Blake's accompanying engravings, which were informed by Stedman's words and sketches, have become some of the most emblematic images of the atrocities slave owners inflicted on their subjects in the Americas.

[35] The dense rainforest interior provided an ideal hiding place for these Maroons. Whereas Maroon societies that developed on islands, such as Jamaica, had a finite amount of forest area in which to hide, ever-shrinking as the island became more developed, Surinamese Maroons had a seemingly limitless expanse of undeveloped forest land at their disposal. (See Bilby 2006). As their numbers increased into the mid- 1700s, so did military expeditions in their pursuit. The subsequent decades gave rise to the Maroon Wars.

[36] For information on the plantation areas from which the six subgroups drew most heavily and during which periods of time, see Healy (1986).

**Figure 1**: Maroon Territories in Suriname and French Guyana




Map Created by C. Scott Walker. Districts of Suriname indicated.

As their numbers grew, the Maroon population became an increasing threat to Surinamese planters. Citizens' militia units were dispatched to find and recapture escaped slaves by the 1670s, and bounties for specific runaways are documented as early as 1685. By the early 18th century, colonists had begun enlisting the help of Amerindians and slaves in their expeditions. Uncovering and attacking Maroon communities became a constant preoccupation. In the ensuing decades, colonists continued to organize independent and collective expeditions, sometimes consisting of over 200 slaves and civilians, but these were costly and often met with failure due to illness, meager rations, and Maroons' effective defensive strategies.[37] This period of conflict between Maroons and the colonial government is known as the Maroon Wars. During this time, concurrent battles were waged between colonists and three separate Maroon populations—the Matawai, Saramaka, and Ndjuka.

Governor J.J. Mauricius orchestrated the first large-scale attempts at peace with the Saramaka in 1749, however the following year the Dutch Council reneged on the agreement and fighting ensued once again.[38] Lasting peace treaties were signed first with the Ndjuka in 1760, followed by the Saramaka in 1762, and the Matawai in 1767.[39] The agreements stipulated that in exchange for ceasing their raids and returning any future runaways to the colony, these Maroon groups would be entitled to regular "gifts" of supplies from the Dutch and granted sole jurisdiction over the land on which they had settled (de Groot 1977, 16). Dutch postholders were to establish themselves among these communities and act as go-betweens between the Maroons and the Dutch

[37] R. Price 1983b 7, 10-12, 17.

[38] Negotiations were carried out on his behalf in 1749 by Captain Lieutenant Carel Otto Creutz and a representative of Saramaka Chief Matáju Dabítatá Ayako. For more information about the treaty and the strained relations between Mauritius and the planters, see R. Price. (1983b).

[39] Hoogbergen (1990) 81-82. Sylvia de Groot has noted that this peace was modeled largely on treaties conducted between Jamaican Maroons and the British shortly before (de Groot 1986, 174).

colonial authorities. Although the terms of these agreements were seldom strictly observed from either side, a tentative peace was established and maintained.[40]

Between when the peace treaties took effect and the abolition of slavery a century later, slaves continued to escape and settle within the forest interior. Some attempted to join existing Maroon communities, however due to the peace agreements, these communities were often obliged to return recent runaways to the Dutch.[41] Others established new societies; the Paramaka, Kwinti, and Aluku (Boni) Maroons formed in this later period, independently of (and sometimes in opposition to) the three 'pacified' Maroon groups.[42]

This early period in Maroon history is called First-Time (*fesi-ten*) by the Saramakas, and Runaway time (*lowetin*) by the Ndjuka. Maroons have painstakingly preserved knowledge of these events for generations, in spoken narratives, proverbs, and song. Likewise, aspects of the physical landscape are often linked to stories of specific battles or ways that Maroon ancestors utilized their physical surroundings in their fights for survival. Not only does First-Time history contain depictions of spiritual power—miraculous events and superhuman feats by warriors under spiritual protection, such as being able to repel bullets or to fly[43]—but knowledge of these events from First-Time are in and of themselves purported to have spiritual power. Additionally, these historical

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[40] See de Groot (1986) for extensive discussion of relations between Maroons and colonists in the early years of these treaties.

[41] While many new runaways who attempted to join existing groups were not manumitted, neither could they depend on assistance—thus, appealing to an existing group constituted a considerable risk. (Hoogbergen 1990, 8.)

[42] Hoogbergen 1990, xiv. Of these three groups, the Aluku (Boni) have received the most scholarly attention. For historical background, see Hoogbergen (1990) and Bilby (1990). Thoden Van Velzen and van Wetering note that those who fled to the forest after the peace treaties are sometimes referred to as 'Bakabusi sama.' (Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering 2004, 283).

[43] Thoden vanVelzen and van Wetering 2004, 178.

fragments are used to trace ancestry and are granted ultimate authority in inter-clan disputes over land.[44]

A People Divided

A particularly sobering consequence of marronage and the ensuing Maroon Wars is the deep rift that developed between the plantation slaves and the Maroons. Colonists were strategic in pitting these groups against one another. They used plantation slaves as spies and members of their campaigns to round up Maroons, baiting them with special privileges.[45] Later, during peace negotiations with the Maroons, colonists stipulated that all future runaways had to be returned to colonial officials. Using these tactics, Dutch colonists ensured that these two Afro-Surinamese populations would continue to be wary of one another, and therefore less likely to band together in opposition to their common foe.

Missionary Involvement

Consistent efforts by both Evangelical and Catholic churches for well over a century have resulted in the gradual acceptance of those institutions by large portions of both the Creole snd Maroon populations. Joop Vernooij marks the first Moravian mission to Suriname as beginning in 1735, with an expedition of three German missionaries to Berg en Dal, along the Suriname River. Evangelizing efforts met with greater success after a Matawai man, who was later named Johannes King, converted to Christianity and undertook his own mission, decrying local belief systems such as *winti* (Green 1978, 251). Catholic mission work began in the mid-nineteenth century. Petrus Donders was one of the first to make an expedition, assisted by the apostolic vicar H. Scaap for his

[44] Price, 1983.

[45] See (de Groot 2009, 19, 101-129) and (R. Price 1983, 153-159).

later missions in 1879 and 1881. In 1895, a Catholic Church was erected on Suriname's western border, in the town of Albina, marking a definitive presence in Suriname's western region.

These nineteenth century missionizing efforts were directed toward the slave and former slave populations of Suriname as debates concerning abolition gained momentum in the Netherlands. It was thought that, by converting the slave populario to the Christian faith, colonists could indoctrinate them with what Gert Oostindie calls the "Western norms of respectability, family life, and work ethic (Oostindie 2005, 35)."

Ethnic Diversity and the Continued Colonial Legacy

Following the abolition of slavery in 1863, planters and the colonial administration had designated a 10-year transitional period, during which slaves were to work on the plantations as employed laborers. As this term came to a close, planters started supplementing their diminished work force with contracted laborers from India, as neighboring British Guyana had begun to do thirty-five years earlier.[46] The terms of the contract included a 'penal sanction,' under which refusal to work or neglect of duty was deemed a criminal offense, allowing planters to maintain strict control over their workers.[47]

Beginning in 1890, Suriname's colonial administration added indentured laborers from Java—also a Dutch colony at that time—to their workforce. While several colonies throughout the Caribbean turned to Indian laborers post-abolition, Suriname's introduction of the Javanese to the plantation workforce has produced a distinguishing element between Suriname's cultural mixture and other former colonies within the Caribbean. Between 1873 and 1939, a total of 34,304 Indians

[46] Oostindie 2005, 44, 56.

[47] Hoefte 1998, 1.

and nearly 33,000 Javanese came to Suriname as indentured workers.[48] Although some did return to their respective homelands at the expiration of their contracts, the majority settled in Suriname permanently. Together, their ancestors comprise over half of Suriname's current population, exercising considerable influence over the social, political, and cultural character of the country.

The first Chinese laborers came to Suriname via Java in 1853, and nearly 3,000 Chinese laborers arrived between 1853-1874.[49] Yet on the whole, Chinese immigration to Suriname has been a much more recent phenomenon. Economic and diplomatic relations were established between the two countries after Suriname's independence, and starting in the 1980's, many Chinese began taking advantage of the free immigration that was extended them by the Surinamese government. This new immigrant population has been especially influential in local commerce.[50] The Chinese corner store/supermarket/general store is so ubiquitous throughout Suriname that they are often referred to as the "Chinese store" (or simply the "Chinese").[51]

Civil War and its Aftermath

When Suriname won its independence from the Netherlands in 1975, many of the country's educated elite anticipated civil unrest and economic fallout, sparking a wave of immigration to the Netherlands.[52] Despite their fears, Suriname's first years as an independent nation remained socially

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[48] Ibid. 1998, 1.

[49] Meagher 2008, 260.

[50] Man A Hing 1992.

[51] With its large numbers of recent immigrants, Suriname's Chinese population is faced with the task of reckoning with this multi-layered cultural and linguistic landscape. The considerable discrimination Chinese Surinamers face as new immigrants is exacerbated at times by the economic benefits from which they are seen to profit as a result of economic relations between Suriname and China, for instance the ease with which they are able to obtain small business permits.

[52] As urban Surinamers left the country en masse, employment opportunities and chances for a better quality of life led to increased numbers of Maroons moving to Paramaribo from their settlements to the south. (Personal communication, Cyril Eersteling 10/10/09.)

and economically stable, largely as a result of the Netherlands' pledge to invest 1.8 billion US dollars over the following twelve years.[53] In 1980, however, a military coup led to the disintegration of this fragile stability. Sergeant Desiré "Desi" Bouterse (b. 1945) came into power, acting as head of the military while controlling a series of political leaders from behind the scenes. At the outset, the military coup met with little public resistance—many Surinamers were disheartened not to see a significant change in the government immediately following independence and hoped this new regime would supplant a model of governance that seemed stale and outdated.[54]

Local and foreign concerns heightened on December 8, 1982, when the military government tortured and executed 15 prominent oppositional figures in the Surinamese public. This massacre, known as the "December killings," reverberated throughout Surinamese society.[55] Fearing for their safety, many prominent intellectuals and media personalities fled to Holland.[56] In response to the December killings, the Dutch withdrew funding, severing the country's financial lifeline.[57] Bouterse responded by securing aid and trade agreements with a number of foreign governments, including those in Cuba, Brazil, Grenada, and Libya, in an effort to keep the economy afloat.[58] Drug trafficking increased, remaining a large part of the Surinamese informal economy for the next decade and beyond.

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[53] Thordike 1990, 35.

[54] Ibid, 35.

[55] For more on this incident, see (Dew 1994, 113), and (R. Price 1995).

[56] This atmosphere, in which political dissent was seen as a risk to one's safety, continued in the years to follow. Among those who sought political asylum was Kifoko's founder, André Mosis, who immigrated to the Netherlands with his family in 1990.

[57] Sedoc-Dahlberg. 1990, 17.

[58]Sedoc-Dahlberg, 1990, 17-35. See also Thorndike in the same volume, p.44-45 for details on how foreign alliances changed within the 1980's, in order to appease those governments that provided the most aid. In particular, the military government's relationship with Cuba needed redefinition in order to maintain trade relations with Brazil.

Over time, as the dictatorial character of Bouterse's leadership became more apparent, Bouterse's former bodyguard, a Maroon named Ronnie Brunswijk (b. 1962), formed an insurgent group, intent on seeing Bouterse step down from power. In the summer of 1986, Brunswijk launched several small-scale raids on military posts in and around the Eastern border town of Albina. By the year's close, his rebel army—the Surinamese National Liberation Army (SNLA), popularly known as the Jungle Commando—consisted of 300 men, most of them Maroons.[59]

For the most part, the ensuing Civil War was fought outside of the district Paramaribo. The Jungle Commando targeted economically important areas (including Moengo, the location of an important bauxite plant, and the power lines connecting the Afobaka hydroelectric dam to both Paramaribo and aluminum processing facilities in Paranam[60]); meanwhile the military government set its sights on Maroon territories, particularly on the country's Eastern border.[61] As Suriname's interior became a war zone, its inhabitants fled the region en masse. Thousands relocated to Paramaribo, while an estimated 10,000 people sought refugee status in neighboring French Guyana.[62]

Moiwana, a village along the Eastern coast of the country, became the site of some of the most publicized atrocities of the military government. Reputed to be a stronghold of Brunswijk and the Jungle Commando, Moiwana was targeted by government troops on November 29, 1986.[63] More than fifty unarmed Maroon civilians were gunned down in the attack. On New Year's Eve of the following year, government troops took seven Maroon civilians from the northern Saramaka village of Atjoni, transported them westward to an area just outside of Moiwana, and murdered

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[59] Dew 1994, 123.

[60] Brana-Shute 2002, 43.

[61] Brunswijk is an Ndjuka (Aukaner) Maroon, one of the Eastern subgroups. His troops hailed predominantly from this region.

[62] Brana-Shute 2002, 48

[63] R. Price, 1995, 443.

them. A memorial now stands just off the major road that connects Paramaribo to Pokigron and points east, in memory of the seven individuals who, on that day, were forced at gunpoint to dig their own graves, into which their dead bodies were later unceremoniously dumped.[64] These tragic events fuelled local and national human rights initiatives, one of the country's most active human rights organizations taking on the name, Moiwana '86, in commemoration.

The incidents at Moiwana make clear that, while the Civil War cannot be reduced to an interior conflict between ethnic groups, neither can the role of ethnicity in the events of the 1980's and the early 1990's be overlooked. Contemporary struggles under the military government reminded many Maroons of their ancestors' struggles for freedom, boosting Maroon support for the Jungle Commando. Meanwhile, in Paramaribo, Bouterse was able to feed off of preexisting animosities between the Creoles and the Maroons, launching a campaign that portrayed the Jungle Commando as a band of terrorists who were undermining a revolutionary process.[65]

The Jungle Commando relied on their knowledge of their Maroon ancestors' battles with colonial powers not only to boost morale, but also in devising military strategy. Just as the founding Maroons had done, insurgent troops conducted systematic raids, and strategized using their superior knowledge of their physical surroundings to compensate for being outnumbered and poorly armed. Many speculated that the Jungle Commando's success was due in part to the assistance of Maroon spiritual healers (*obiamen*), who outfitted the rebels with various forms of spiritual fortification, allowing them to repel bullets and accomplish other surprising feats. As the conflict wore on, both proponents of the military government and the Jungle Commando sought the support of Maroons who were considered adept at harnessing the power of the spirit world.[66]

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[64] R. Price 1995, 439-440.

[65] See R. Price (1995) and Brana-Shute (2002).

[66] See Dew 1994, 124-125; Polimé and Thoden van Velzen 1988, 84-91; Thoden van Velzen 2004, 239-261.

As with the Maroon Wars some 230 years previous, the Civil War came to an ambiguous conclusion, and not before failed attempts. The initial negotiations between the military government and the Jungle Commando took place in Kourou, French Guyana, in 1989. However, as historians Kruijt and Hoogberger claim, "The Kourou Accord proved to be no more than a piece of paper; the Government of Surinam did nothing more than to publish the peace agreement."[67] The Civil War continued on until 1992, when it finally concluded with the signing of the Lelydorp Accord, a modified version of the 1989 document.[68]

Among the government's incentives to negotiate for peace were a $10 million hardwood logging agreement with a Japanese company, and large-scale bauxite and gold mining deals with the U.S. and Canada.[69] These contracts were contingent upon a safe working environment in the region. Furthermore, the process of reconciliation would serve to strengthen Maroons' status as Surinamese citizens, rather than a people with rights to the land from which the (urban) Surinamese economy could benefit.

Nearly two decades after the war concluded, the refugee camps of French Guyana's border city, Saint Laurent, have been converted into more permanent residences, yet they remain overpopulated. Although larger villages and towns, including Stoelman's Island and Albina, have been reconstructed to some degree, charred buildings and bits of wreckage remain part of the landscape, long-term residents of these areas often turn nostalgic in talking about these areas' former

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[67] Kruijt and Hoogberger 2004, 204.

[68] When the peace talks reconvened, additional parties were brought into discussions. Offshoot militia groups, most of them frustrated by the damage that warfare was causing to other groups in the outlying areas, expressed their own political positions. The Tucayanas, a primarily Amerindian group, was the most vocal third party in these debates early on, but opted out of peace talks as they continued on. (Dew 1994, 71-74, 195-96).

[69] Dew 1994, 195.

beauty. The losses sustained by Surinamers on both sides of the conflict are still fresh and deeply felt.

In August, 2010, Desi Bouterse again assumed leadership of Suriname, this time as the democratically elected president.[70] Many who lived through the civil war and suffered trauma and personal loss find it difficult to imagine how this could have happened, yet that his political party had widespread popular support was clear through propaganda, rallies, and supporters' presence at a range of citywide events that took place in the year leading up to the election.[71]

With his presidency in it's first term, many Surinamers and expats look on anxiously to see if Bouterse can distinguish his present station as a democratically elected leader from the dictatorial regime he established 20 years before. Of particular interest is how he will maintain relations with the members of the National Assembly, including his former bodyguard-turned-political rival, Ronnie Brunswijk.

## Maroon Lifeways[72]

[70] The elections were held in May, with Bouterse assuming the role of President in August.

[71] Despite the popular support Bouterse has within his country, he continues to face censure for his actions during his former rule. In 1999, charges were brought against Bouterse by the Netherlands, where he was tried in absentia and found guilty on drug trafficking and sentenced to an 11-year prison sentence. Suriname and the Netherlands have no extradition agreement, thus while he remains in his homeland, he may not be apprehended. For the duration of his term as president of Suriname, Bouterse is immune from the charges. Within his own country, Bouterse remains under investigation in an ongoing trial concerning the December killings, of which he is believed to be the mastermind. In the 1990's Bouterse and his administration have been tried and found guilty of the Moiwana killings in 1987 by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

[72] As with most scholars who have conducted research on the Maroons, I have an unequal distribution of knowledge and information among all six subgroups. My knowledge of the Ndjuka (Okanisi) group is the most extensive, owing to my initial contacts being primarily people of that subgroup, and also to that group's primary role in the performance styles represented by the three groups with which I worked in Paramaribo. Cultural variations do exist between all six subgroups, many of these I indicate in the following pages. However, I acknowledge that this brief description of Maroon culture inevitably bears the stamp of my personal bias, as well as the uneven distribution of scholarly attention to the six subgroups.

The social responsibilities, customs, and belief systems by which contemporary Maroons live their lives are increasingly varied and open to interpretation. What I outline below are some of the practices and principles that characterize traditional Maroon lifeways; they are considered viable, 21st century practices of sociality and are often indicative of a family's or community's expectations of an individual.

Social Structure

Maroon kinship is traced through the matrilineal line.[73] Within each Maroon subgroup, individuals trace their history to a broad descent group, termed *lo*.[74] Smaller subgroups are distinguished at the level of the *bee*, the matrilineal extended family. Each Maroon subgroup is governed by a paramount chief, or *gaanman*. Under the jurisdiction of the *gaanman* are a number of *kabiteni,* who govern on a regional level, and *basia*, who likewise act as authorities and consultants, yet without the degree of authority and jurisdictional power of a *kabiteni*. A sizeable village is likely to have multiple *basia* and *kabiteni*, who settle local disputes and preside over important discussions.[75] *Basia* and *kabiteni* are likewise appointed for urban areas, including Paramaribo, St. Laurent, and in the Netherlands. Matters of importance to the community are discussed at *kuutu*'s, council meetings, which can range in size from a relatively small cluster of individuals, consisting of few

[73] Although political succession is determined through the matrilineal line, the Maroon system of jurisdiction remains characteristically (although not exclusively) male dominated. In recent years, an increasing number of women have assumed positions of authority—most notably for this study, the village of Santigron has a female kabiteni.

[74] Richard Price distinguishes a Saramakan understanding of *lo* from that of the Ndjuka, (Okanisi). Whereas the latter treat *lo*'s as family units that share an ancestral bond, Price describes the concept as used by the Saramakas stating, "In runaway days, *lo* referred to the (non-genealogically constituted) bands which eventually joined to become the Saramaka tribe, and the matrilineal descendants of each of these bands belonging to that *lo*. Thus, two current *lo* members may or may not even be supposed, by Saramakas, to have distant genealogical connections; what they are supposed to share is matrilineal descent from the members of a named fighting band. " (Price 1975: 49).

[75] The position of *gaanman* and the subordinate leadership positions have been recognized authorities since the peace treaties of the 1760's. These Maroon juridicial leaders receive a stipend from the coastal government. (de Groot 1977, 16).

others than the parties involved and one or more elders or members of council, to large-scale events involving a large proportion of adults in a given community. Within the immediate family, maternal uncles exercise decision-making authority, and are responsible for providing for their sisters' children.

Daily life marks several clear divisions between male and female social roles. Women's responsibilities include cleaning, cooking, looking after the children, and doing agricultural work, while men's duties include hunting, domestic repairs and construction (larger projects include building a house or canoe) for his one or multiple wives, and likewise the provision of financial support for spouses and, to a lesser degree, female kinsmen. The physical space in a village reflects these occupational divisions; it is polarized (though not generally strictly segregated) by gender, with women doing work collectively, often congregating at the riverside to do washing or prepare food, or working an agricultural plot alongside one another.[76] Men work and travel in each other's company as well, and usually spend their evenings together, relaxing and talking with one another.

Religion

Components of Maroon spirituality can be found in virtually all facets of life, including social organization, medicinal practices, and the performing arts.[77] While addressing the basic

[76] There are some exceptions, in which gender segregation is often strictly observed. One example is the seclusion of menstruating women. In a village, women are generally expected to take up temporary residence in a separate hut (*munu oso* in Okanisi, *faági* in Saramakan) for the duration of their period. This seclusion is due to certain spiritual proscriptions; exposure to a menstruating woman—physical contact or ingesting food that she has cooked is thought to make a man weaker and prone to illness and misfortune. (See S. Price 1994 for a more in-depth discussion of these practices, and a discussion of the ways in which such observances have been used and distorted by outside scholars as evidence toward a range of social and political agendas. Notably, I found that some women who do not follow Maroon spiritual practices did not find it an imperative to observe this taboo, although for the majority of women living in the interior, my impression is that this is not thought of as something one can opt out of. For Paramaribo residents, it is nearly impossible for women to seclude themselves as totally as they would in a village.

[77] See R. Price 1975 (Social Structure) 46-49 for one example (in which Price relates avenging spirits, or *kunu*, to the importance of the *bee*, the matrilineal extended family). See Diane Vernon (1980) for a discussion of how spiritual beliefs affect Maroon medicine and healing.

characteristics of Maroon spiritual practice is therefore useful, here I present only what is necessary to contextualize the activities of traditional performance troupes and their members. A number of scholars, among them André Pakosie, Diane VernonH.U.E Thoden van Velzen, and Wilhemina van Wetering have produced works that address Maroon indigenous belief systems—both the established traditions and the recent developments—in greater detail.[78]

Each of the six Maroon subgroups differs somewhat in their religious practices, but some general characteristics can be identified. Maroon traditional religions recognize one supreme deity, known by many names, including *Nana Kedyama Keedyampon, Gaan Gadu* and *Masaa Gadu*. Contact between humans and this supreme God is mediated through lesser spirits and deities, of which there are many kinds, each with its own distinct character and capabilities.[79] The spirit world—populated by ancestor spirits (*yooka*), demons (*bakuu*),[80] spirits of the forest (*ampuku*), reptile spirits (*papa/vodu*), and those residing in celestial spirits and animals of prey (*kumanti*)—is constantly interacting with the physical world. Spirit mediums (*wentiman*) and spiritual specialit/consultants (*obiaman*), are consulted or appealed to regularly to ensure health and well-being, and to determine the causes of and solutions to a variety of phenomena, ranging from a person's bad luck to ascertaining the cause of a person's death.[81]

When an individual is suffering from an illness, an examination of the social conditions that may have caused spiritual unrest are equally, if not more important, than the physical symptoms. A person will often maintain various restrictions in diet or activity in order to stay in a spirit's good

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[78] See Pakosie (2008), Vernon (1980, 1985), and Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering (1991, 2004).

[79] Polime 1992, 31.

[80] Compared to the other kinds of lesser gods listed here, *bakuu* entered religious pantheon relatively recently. For a case study of these spirits' emergence in a single village, see (Vernon 1980).

[81] The parenthesized terms correspond with those given in Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering (2004), who conducted their research among the Ndjuka (Okanisi). Regional variations in terminology may apply.

graces. Healers prescribe medicinal baths for a number of physical and spiritual ailments. In such cases, a successful appeal to or pacification of a spirit is deemed as crucial to recovery as a healer's skillful combination of medicinal ingredients.

The health and spiritual alignment of any individual is tied to that of the collective, and to the members of the matrilineal line in particular. Thus, one person's misdeeds could leave that person's family members, and even future matrilineal kinsmen, susceptible to illness or misfortune. As a result, family members have a vested interest in their kinsmen's behavior.

When a person dies, village priests determine whether the person was rendered dead by gods, spirits, or by a malevolent spirit, or furthermore whether the deceased was a witch (*wisiman*) and found guilty of inflicting harm on others.[82] If an individual is found to have a clean spirit, family and loved ones hold a series of funerary rites to ensure his safe passage to the realm of the ancestors.[83] Further, these rites become important points at which to assess the spiritual health of the community at large. In addition to the burial, observances are held eight days and six weeks after a person's death, and a final mourning ritual, called a *broko dei*, is held at a later point—the various Maroon subgroups differ regarding the length the period of mourning leading up to the *broko dei*. Music and dance play important roles in all of these events, providing a steady lineup of engagements for many performance groups. The music and dance style, *tuka*, is to be performed only on the evening of a burial, while a variety of performance styles—both traditional and popular—are featured in the funerary rites that take place after the burial.[84]

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[82] Thomas Polime states, "Er bestaat geen natuurlijke dood in de visie van de bosnegers." There is no natural death in the [religious/world] vision of the Businengee. (Polime, 1992) 33.

[83] Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering 2004, 79-82.

[84] There is, however, a prescribed order to many of the traditional musical genres featured at a funerary rite. For the Okanisi, for instance, the prescribed order of music styles is that of the *gaansama pee* (see Chapter 3): *mato, susa, songe, awasa*. Popular music, including *aleke* and *kaseko*, are often performed from the late evening to the early morning.

Of particular significance to Maroon performance are the *wenti* spirits, which therefore warrant a more detailed discussion. André Pakosie offers the following explanation of *wenti*:

> God and the [lesser] gods can be compared with the wind. Just as the wind can be heard and felt but not seen, at least not with the bare eye, people hear and feel God and the [lesser] gods, but not see them. God and the [lesser] gods are unseen beings, yéyé (spirits). The unseen being that from time to time manifests itself in people or another natural entity in order to "interfere" with human affairs is called in Ndyuka (language), 'wenti.' Creoles speak of "winti." Wenti or winti can be transported by the wind. The word 'winti' is also the word for wind in the Surinamese Creole language. The Ndyuka call the wind 'winta'"[85]

A *wenti pee* is an event in which the community can give audience to the spirit world. Sometimes these events are held in order to address a specific concern or problem,[86] but just as often they are held as part of maintaining communication with these spirits more generally.

Music and dance are integral to these events. Each *wenti* has preferred rhythms, and a knowledgeable drummer can use these to cajole or goad a spirit into manifesting its presence in the body of an attendee. A lead drummer will intersperse non-lexical rhythmic material with messages conveyed by the drum in a ritual language. Additionally, the *yooka*, or ancestor spirits, are attracted by musical styles from previous generations; *seketi* and *kawina*, which were popular genres during their lifetimes, continue to be sources of pleasure for *yooka* in the afterlife.[87]

While *wenti pee*'s are events orchestrated for the expressed purpose of fostering communication with these spirits, *wenti's* can and do possess individuals at other times as well. In these other contexts as with the *wenti pee*, music provides a central means of calling a *wenti* to take human form. The performance group Saisa was the only group out of the three featured in this

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[85] Pakosie 2008, 5-6. Translated from Dutch by Corinna Campbell.

[86] Pakosie notes, this, in particular, concerns the Creoles.

[87] While it is relatively common to hear of religious music infiltrating the popular musical domain, the music performed for *yooka* provides an interesting example of the inverse, in which popular musical forms accrue additional spiritual social functions over time.

study that included explicitly religious music as part of their standard repertoire.[88] When playing this repertoire, members of the group or their audience would often be overcome by a *wenti*, regardless of whether the event was a general performance, birthday party, or political rally.

For those unused to the sight, witnessing a spirit overtake an individual is a dramatic event, the presence of a *wenti* discernable in sounds and movements that contrast sharply from everyday behavior. Occupied by a *wenti*, its host may exhibit uncommon strength, or perform actions that would cause physical pain, if not for the spirit's consuming presence. This aspect of Maroon culture is the source of wonder and curiosity for many tourists and non-Maroons; the *faya dansi*, in which a possessed individual dances barefoot in an open fire, is a performance that holds particular fascination.[89] In formal presentations, a variety of performance troupes, including Kifoko, have simulated sounds and actions associated with spirit possession for dramatic effect.[90]

The *apinti doon*, used for a variety of secular dance styles, is also featured in music for the various *wenti*. Through manufacturing a drum out of a certain kind of wood and undergoing a series of rituals in a drum's construction and maintenance, an instrument maker can imbue a drum with a certain spiritual valence. Other instruments are intended exclusively for use in communing with the

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[88] The two genres that were thought to have spiritual valence were *susa* and *kumanti*, both of which will be discussed in detail later in the dissertation. When specifically requested to do so, they would perform music associated with other spirits in the Maroon pantheon, for instance the music associated with *papa/vodu*. Saisa's *susa* performances were of an altogether different nature than were Kifoko's, in terms of its music, dance, and social function. Possession was common in the Saisa performances, which were communal in character, while in the version that Kifoko performed, two men would test each other's speed, sense of timing, and agility in a game involving rhythmic footwork. Possession never occurred during a Kifoko performance of the genre, nor was it expected to happen.

[89] Neither Kifoko, Saisa, nor Fiamba included this as part of their repertoire, yet the troupe Denku is said to have performed this dance under the direction of the late Da Awagi, a well respected *apintiman*.

[90] During the course of my fieldwork, Kifoko performed such a simulation in collaboration with the national performance troupe, Alakondre Dron (more on this later in the diss). Likewise, the street dance troupe Mystikal choreographed a possession scene as part of an Afro-Surinamese-themed performance presented at an intermission at the Maroon girls' multi-talent competition, called the SaDuMa contest, in April 2009. For a related discussion on staged interpretations and representations of religious ritual, see Hagedorn 2001.

gods. For instance, the long *agida* drum is closely associated with the *papa/vodu* spirits and is not to be played in other contexts.

The spiritual practices of Suriname's Creole and Maroon populations overlap considerably. Both Creole and Maroon populations host *wenti pee's*, although different spirits and practices feature more or less heavily, depending on the region, ethnic makeup of the attendees, and the circumstances of performance.[91] Parallels exist between the religious vocabularies and practices of both groups.

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As important as indigenous religious practices may be within the Maroon community at large, the Moravian and Roman Catholic Churches are undeniably influential in the lives of many Maroons in both rural and urban settings. Many Maroons choose to perform their social and creative activities within the social and thematic frameworks of the Church. Some congregations incorporate performance genres including *awasa*, *aleke*, and *kaseko* into their worship, developing songs and dance choreographies that graft religious themes onto these local styles. In addition to performing during church services, gospel bands and choirs often perform at birthday parties, funerals, and other social events hosted by members of the religious congregation, thereby fulfilling many of the same social functions as performance groups like Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba. The secular and faith-based performance groups seldom interact directly, yet individuals from one sphere are often cognizant of performance practices, circulations, and innovations of the other. Occasionally Christian and secular circulatory routes overlap in surprising ways. For example, the Ritveld sisters, two of Kifoko's youngest members, started attending rehearsals primarily so they could more fully participate in the dance activities of their church.

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[91] Indeed, the multiethnic character of Suriname shows itself in the pantheon of spirits involved in these events—beyond the African and Afro-Surinamese spirits, Hindustani and Amerindian spirits are also recognized and respected. (Personal communication, Ernie Wolf.)

The wide variety of ways that people interpret spirituality and its relation to Maroon performance traditions will surface throughout this dissertation. Many Maroons who grew up practicing traditional styles of music and dance come to view involvement in such activities as detracting or diverging from their religious convictions and practices. Others adapt Maroon performance traditions for the Church, and still others see no contradiction in participating in both realms independently from one another. At present, it will suffice to acknowledge that the Christian community within Paramaribo fosters an important and distinct creative outlet for many Maroons.

Travel and Migration

By now, it should be apparent that, despite perhaps seeming isolated at first, the Maroon settlements in the jungle interior are in fact strongly and importantly connected to urban, cosmopolitan, national, and international products, ideas, and economies. Travel and migration are thus critically important aspects of Maroon social life.

Owing to the dense forest vegetation, the primary mode of transportation for those in the rainforest interior, both locally and over longer distances, is by canoe. Canoes vary considerably in size, from modest *pailbotos* (paddle boats), which hold as few as three or four people, to large constructions that can transport dozens of people at a time, powered by an outboard motor. Many Maroon men make their living transporting goods or visitors from the coast to villages further inland using these larger, motorized canoes.

**Figure 2**: Two boatmen rest with their cargo, a Jeep that is balanced between two attached canoes.

(Photo by the author, 2007.)

Navigating the rapids and submerged rocks, especially during the dry seasons when the water is low, requires an experienced and knowledgeable boatman. Maroons are well aware of the challenges and dangers of this form of transportation. While one might notice a boatman balancing along the lip of a canoe as a boat speeds along a patch of tranquil water with apparent nonchalance, a palpable tension settles over travelers as they make their way through rapids and other precarious stretches of river. Many Maroons residing in the city indicated that they did not go to visit relatives in the interior more often (or at all) because they so disliked, or even feared, traveling by canoe. Reaching the more remote settlements from the city often requires an arduous journey of multiple days.[92] The other transportation option for those with the means to do so is to take a small charter

[92] Some roads do connect urban centers with outlying Maroon settlements. The Cottica Ndyuka live along the Eastern Surinamese coastline, and transportation by car is feasible to a number of northern villages, including Sara Creek (Saa Kiiki), Brokopondo, Nieuw Koffiecamp and, most importantly for this study, Santigron. (See Saisa's profile for more information about this village and its importance to the members of Saisa.)

plane to one of several landing strips in the interior, yet for most Maroons, especially those who make frequent trips to the interior, this mode of travel is prohibitively expensive.

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Maroon migration to the urban coastal areas has been a continuous process since the late 1800's (de Groot 1977), marked by several periods of intensification. The colonial government attempted to control or manipulate this dialogue at a number of different points—after the peace treaties were signed in the 1760's, travel to the city was to be monitored by Dutch postholders, installed at various points along the riverways of the interior. These postholders were to issue passes, which a Maroon was to show upon request. As Maroons proved useful to urban industries, and as the value of their land became clear, the Dutch switched tactics from a desire to regulate the numbers of Maroons in the urban areas to encouraging Maroons to relocate to these same areas.[93] Another intensification of migration occurred in the 1970's, as Suriname transitioned to independence. As Paramaribo's urban elite left en masse for Holland, they left in their wake jobs that needed to be filled; housing options that formerly would have been out of reach were rendered attainable. Finally, as civil war ravaged a number of interior settlements, many Maroons evacuated their homes and resettled in Paramaribo, or in neighboring French Guyana.

As life in the interior is constantly more intertwined with a cash economy and employment opportunities are limited, work opportunities lead many Maroons to pursue work in the city. Historically, men have traveled most often and for the longest durations in search of work, yet it is increasingly common for both men and women to travel to the coast, either for work or education opportunities. Another common motivation for short-term travel is for health reasons. There are medical facilities in several villages in the interior, and many people will go to Maroon medical and

[93] Groot 2009, 20-25.

spiritual healers for treatment, yet for serious illnesses, many people visit hospitals in Paramaribo or either St. Laurent or Cayenne, French Guyana.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a growing sector of Suriname's economy, one in which Maroons' heavy involvement is likely to continue. As experts at navigating Suriname's riverways, many of them particularly knowledgeable about the rainforest's flora and fauna, their skills are in demand. Beyond their knowledge of their surroundings, however, Maroon traditions have themselves become a tourist attraction, their particular history and social customs a source of curiosity for visitors. Several savvy Maroon entrepreneurs have launched their own tour operations, often specializing in tours to their home villages, where they set up tourist camps with the cooperation of family and social networks. Presentations of local music and dance styles are commonly billed as a tour's evening entertainment, providing an economic incentive for performers.

The three groups in this study are connected to tourist ventures to varying degrees. MaYeDu Tours is owned and operated by the Tojo family, to which many members of Kifoko belong. This connection brings the occasional curious vacationer to observe Kifoko's rehearsals; likewise, a contingent of tourists came to witness a part of the *broko dei* funerary rites in which Kifoko participated in the Paramakan village of Tabikiede, accompanied by a senior Kifoko member. In the Saramakan village of Santigron, the tourism agency Arinze Tours, under the direction of the Saramakan, George Lazo, has relied on the youngsters of Santigron to put on performances for tourists. This organization has helped to foster interest and skills of young villagers, acting as a feeder group for Saisa, and also for the Santigron-affiliated group, Tangiba. Since 2009, Fiamba has begun working with the management of Zus en Zo—a popular restaurant and hotel for tourists in Paramaribo. They perform regularly during busy weekend evenings for

audiences of tourists and foreigners, and in 2011, Fiamba was in the process of organizing lessons through this establishment.

Yet, while Suriname's natural resources might seem inexhaustible, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the environmental toll that decades of mining and lumber operations have exacted on the rainforest on which Suriname's Maroon and Amerindian populations have depended for centuries, and the increasing rate at which concessions are being granted to multinational corporations. Massive portions of the rainforest are clear-cut, primarily by Chinese shipping container manufacturers (Price 2011, 105). Gold and aluminum mining operations, both large and small, leave craters of barren soil, filled with stagnating water where mosquitoes and other insects can breed. Through these mining operations toxic chemicals, including mercury, are introduced into local water sources. Consequently, disputes between Maroon authorities and the Surinamese government over land rights involve incredibly high stakes.

**Figure 3.** An aerial view of a mine along the Suriname River.

**Figure 4**, a similar mining operation in the same area, as seen from the ground. (Figure 3 is taken by the auther in 2007, Figure 4 by Max Bree in 2008.)[94]

## Paramaribo

> "Arriving in Paramaribo, it is hard to imagine that Suriname is one of the world's leading destinations for eco-tourism. Ugly development, a serious traffic problem and other offshoots of urbanization have spoiled a once beautiful city, and these days you cannot see the flowers for the weeds. Pleasant streets with fine colonial architecture do survive, but you have to fight your way through car fumes, shopping malls and traffic jams to get to them. This struggle makes Paramaribo a tiring, disappointing city, redeemed only slightly by the refreshing Suriname River, upon whose bank Paramaribo sprawls, some twelve kilometers from the point where the river spills into the Atlantic Ocean."
>
> —*Rough Guide to South America*, 2004.

> "Amsterdam meets the Wild West in Paramaribo, the most vivacious and striking capital in the Guyanas."
>
> –*Lonely Planet: South America on a Shoestring,* 2010.

In this final section of the chapter I focus on Paramaribo, the site of my fieldwork and the home of the members of Saisa, Kifoko, and Fiamba. I begin with a basic description of the city

[94] For a more thorough account of the environmental threats to Suriname's rainforests and in relation to Maroon societies in particular, see Price 2011.

itself; subsequently, I focus on aspects of the social atmosphere of the city, raising several points for readers to consider about the challenges of navigating social interactions in such a staunchly multiethnic environment. I introduce some of the representational dilemmas that are specific to Maroons, affecting both formal and informal performances of identity. I end with short descriptions of three different occasions in which performance groups or members thereof are involved: funerary rites, birthday parties, and the beauty and talent competitions that have become widely popular throughout the city.

A Tour of the City: Paramaribo 2008-2009

A ride around the outskirts of Paramaribo will inevitably take you past a number of Chinese corner stores with hand-painted illustrations of beer cans and brand name staple foods depicted, larger than life, on their façades. Characteristic neighborhood businesses include taxi stands, restaurants and bars,[95] beauty salons, barbershops, and cybercafés. Along main roads, street vendors sell local produce from under tents; others roam between cars at major intersections, selling newspapers, trinkets, or small fruits called kinepa, strung together with twine and sold as an edible bouquet.

Cultural centers and houses of worship for various ethnicities and faiths interrupt a landscape pervaded by cement storefronts and wood slatted houses. While in the downtown area Dutch colonial buildings are carefully maintained and regularly repainted, beyond a limited radius, similar structures are considerably worse for wear—graying houses are often held dubiously upright, with large gaps between their wooden slats. Metal gates partition one residence from the next, from the most modest to the well-to-do, and a dog is likely to be lying around in the yard just within. The

[95] These businesses are often family owned. Typical fare might include Indian rotis, bami or nasi (Indonesian fried noodles or rice, respectively).

trenches on either side of a residential street, grown over with grass, obscure bits of litter and who-knows-what-else, contributing to the olfactory experience of the city.

During the day, school kids travel about town in their uniforms- green plaid shirts for primary school, light blue shirts for secondary. Pedestrians tend to keep a parasol handy, useful both as shade from the intense glare of the sun and for the frequent showers that arrive and dissipate with astonishing speed. Minibuses provide an inexpensive and relatively efficient way of getting around the city. Most buses feature a variety of decals of political or entertainment personalities, women striking a variety of seductive poses, or various braggadocios in either English or Sranan.

But beyond these shared landmarks and characteristic encounters, the experience of the city—its places of significance and its most familiar attributes—vary dramatically depending on an individual's age, class, and perhaps most of all, one's ethnicity. Many places of primary importance in urban Maroon culture are virtually unknown to people of other ethnicities, and vice versa, despite the fact that they often exist in close proximity to one another. Although there tends to be more interethnic interaction among younger generations, the general trend is for ethnic groups to continue to live alongside one another, while maintaining clear social and cultural divisions between them.

## MAROONS IN AN URBAN POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE

Suriname's ethnic diversity has long been touted as one of the country's most distinguishing features, and nowhere is the cultural variety more evident than in its capital city. Truly, the coexistence of cultural difference is at times remarkable—the Mosque Keizerstraat and Neveh Shalom Synagogue standing adjacent to one another on Keizerstraat is one of the most oft cited examples. Yet this coexistence is not always as harmonious as the national doctrine would have one believe. A stay in Paramaribo for any significant length of time makes clear that longstanding

animosities and discriminatory attitudes simmer just below the surface. The following discussions of language, interactions within the elite space of one of the country's most lavish hotels, and an account of the first nationally recognized 'Day of the Maroons,' all bear witness to this undercurrent, and specifically its implications for Maroons.

Language

> *It's late afternoon on a Sunday. I'm waiting for a bus on one of the main roads near my apartment, but I know I could be waiting a long time. Most all of the businesses have shut down, the streets are quiet, and the few buses that are running wait until they are full before leaving the bus depots. I start walking towards town. A car pulls up alongside me, and the driver invites me to hop in. I respond in halting Dutch: No, thank you, I'll take a bus. The driver is persistent, creeping along at the speed of my walking. He assures me he's a good man and I shouldn't be afraid. He drove a cab for many years. He has a wife and several kids. Besides, it could be a long time before a bus comes along and I shouldn't be walking by myself. I change from Dutch to Okanisi, the language in which I am more fluent, as I continue to refuse his offer. "No spang nanga mi, mi o wakti wan bus. Ifu a no kon mi sa bel wan taxi." (Don't worry with me, I'll wait for a bus. If it doesn't come, I can call a taxi.) I am getting anxious—he's been at this for long enough. I say, "Gaantangi fu i yee, ma mi o wakti ja."[96] (Thank you, but I'll wait here.) The man bristles. Reading my switch in language as my estimation of his background rather than what it was—a switch into a language in which I could more easily communicate—he says he's not a Maroon, he's a Creole. (He has a dark complexion, and his ethnicity is not obvious to me from his appearance.) Immediately he drops his cajoling tone and barks in Sranan, "I don't like those people," speeding away in a huff.*[97]

Earlier in this chapter, I described how the different terms for various Maroon groups carry with them subtle distinctions in meaning. In an environment in which most residents speak and understand a variety of languages, speakers convey a great deal of information not only through their choice of words, but also through their choice of language, or through their combination of multiple languages.

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[96] This response could be considered Nengee as well. Certainly, though it conveys respect, the language is informal and indicative of the city context in which I learned to speak.

[97] Out of choice or necessity, I spoke in Okanisi with a number of Creoles, and often their reactions were positive. I use this example not to portray any general attitude of the Creole population at large, but rather to illustrate one particularly striking example of how language choice can have a profound affect on social interaction.

Most Paramaribo residents utilize a variety of languages and dialects in the course of their daily lives. Dutch is Suriname's official language, and many locals are equally or more comfortable speaking in Dutch as they are the language of their particular ethnic group. Sranan Tongo (Suriname Tongue) functions as a lingua franca for many individuals. The languages from which it borrows most heavily and its grammatical structures overlap with the Maroon languages, particularly those of the Eastern Maroons. As a result, many consider these languages mutually intelligible, and a great deal of vocabulary is borrowed between them.[98]

In listening to the manner of speaking and the vocabularies that urban Maroons employ when speaking the language of their particular subgroup, it is easy to detect a variety of differences from how the same language would be used in a village setting. Maroons would often distinguish between a sort of "moksi tongo," (mixed language) or "foto fasi" (city way) of speaking and the *dipi* (deep, and usually considered more authentic) language utilized by older generations or those who had spent more time in the villages. Greetings provide a popular example of the difference; whereas a traditional greeting involves a series of short, prescribed questions and responses, a typical greeting in the city can be completed in a matter of syllables.

During fieldwork, such a variety of languages were used that it was at times difficult to define the language, or even the particular hybrid of different languages, in which people were conversing. As will be shown in the chapters to follow, the 'correct' usage of language was at times an effective way for groups and individuals to demonstrate cultural proficiency; at other times it was the source of a great deal of conversation and debate. This in turn mirrors larger debates and anxieties about the nature of cultural borrowing in such a multiethnic city, and how cultural knowledge about one ethnic group is (or is not) transmitted to each successive generation.

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[98] City residents often use the term 'Nengee' to describe a mode of speaking in which Sranan and Maroon languages are deeply blended. 'Nengee' can also refer to a black person (as in Businengee, or 'Bush Negro,' as discussed earlier), or to a person more generally (as in *pikinnengee*, the Okanisi word for a child, literally a small person).

**Table 2:** Comparison of Okanisi Greetings

| A Representative Greeting in the Okanisi language[99] | Abridged Version, common among urban Maroons and younger agemates |
|---|---|
| Speaker 1: U miti oo<br>*We meet*<br>Speaker 2: U miti yee<br>*Yes, we meet*<br>1: Da, u de?<br>*Then, we're here/ we're present [meaning, how are you?]*<br>2: U de baa/u de mooi [pause] u seefi de?<br>*We're certainly here/ we're doing well [pause] How are you?*<br>1: Iya, u de baa<br>*Yes, we're certainly here. [I'm fine]*<br>2: Eeya<br>*Yes*<br>1. Hmm<br>*[Close of greeting sequence]* | Speaker 1: Fa e go?/Ofa?<br>*How's it going?*<br>Speaker 2: Mi de/Cool/Safisafi<br>*I'm here/Cool/I'm well.* |

Maroons in Elite Spaces—Torarica Stories

Hotel Torarica features in each of the excerpts below. As one of the most elite hotels in Paramaribo and a venue for many high profile events, Torarica is frequented by businesspeople, tourists, and the upper echelons of Surinamese society. I found that it functioned as a potent signifier of affluence and privilege within the city. As such, different relationships to and interactions within the hotel provide a compelling angle from which to consider broader issues of class and ethnicity. Below are three vignettes—the first is taken from an autobiographical narrative written by John Walsh, relaying his experiences as the head of an animal rescue mission in Suriname

[99] This example is, in itself, extremely short. If this exchange transpired between people who had not met in a while, this opening exchange would be followed by a series of questions about family members and mutual acquaintances. These greetings are often embellished, formalized, or personalized by adding terms of relation or respect, i.e. mother, father, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, *biya* (used among male agemates), or terms used in relating to a spouse's family (*swagi, mai, pai*).

during 1964;[100] the latter two are taken from my own fieldwork experiences, recreated from fieldnotes, video footage, and later reflections.

> Most of the time, too, I took Wimpy, Sime, and maybe one other Bushnegro along with me on my supply trips. Usually they'd stay with friends in the Bushnegro section of Paramaribo—run-down rooming houses where Bushnegroes stay when they come to the city to get supplies for their villages, places that charge a quarter a night for a room that holds half a dozen people. Here, in the sandy backyards, the kids stripped, and the women slipped out of their blouses without feeling awkward in front of the townspeople. Occasionally for kicks, some of the guys would sleep in my Torarica room, though they turned purple from the air conditioning. They'd sling their hammocks from doorknobs, closet bars, over doors or windows, one above the other in a mishmash of ropes and crazy-quilt slings. Come morning I'd wake to find them cooking breakfast of rice and spices over primus stoves, the odor saturating the hallway.
>
> Sometimes they'd begin to drive Marcel Wartman, the manager, out of his skull. Like the times they'd ride the elevator up and down for hours, marveling at the magic of teleportation. Or the time Etty first saw the fish in the garden pool, jumped in with a machete flailing, and triumphantly presented me with a decapitated walappa fish.
>
> By the end of that first year, though, the hotel people had pretty well gotten used to us. It was only the tourists who were surprised to look up from their dice in the casino and see someone who looked like an American beatnick and a dozen black dwarfs animatedly babbling in some foreign tongue.[101]

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*It is Friday night, and the club at the back of Torarica is gearing up for an evening of dancing. Locals and foreigners alike pass by, dressed to impress. The members of Kifoko are waiting to perform what could fairly be called an interlude—a brief entertainment to amuse the early birds while the club is still filling up. The management determines that the group can't wait in the parking lot in front of the entrance, so they are escorted to a hallway in a wing with a large conference room. The air conditioning is going full blast, and it is uncomfortably cold. After a long wait, the performers are escorted back to the dance floor. The DJ finishes playing his set of house and electronica music, and an open space is cleared for the dancers.*

*The performance is short- only a couple of songs. The audience is very attentive, and quickly grows in size once the show begins. One woman standing near me is clearly in the mood to dance, and eagerly joins in when invited. The performer who invites her into the clearing smiles at her efforts and her enthusiasm. At the opposite end of the performance space, one of Kifoko's female members dances with a Maroon woman from audience who clearly knows how to dance awasa. They smile broadly at each other and embrace after dancing together for a short while. It could be that the Kifoko dancer and the woman in the audience know each other, but the embrace could just as easily be between strangers acknowledging a shared connection.*

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[100] John Walsh was the head of an animal rescue mission called "Operation Gawamba," following the construction of the Afobaka Dam, flooding of a large portion of the Suriname River and forcing the evacuation of thousands of Saramakans.

[101] Walsh 1967, 157-158.
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*Kifoko's performance ends just as abruptly as it began. Outside the dance floor, the group catches their breath. Some passers-by complement them on their performance. The Maroon woman who was dancing awasa comes over and exchanges a greeting with some of the members. Two or three tourists ask to have their pictures taken with members of the group, their evening dresses and designer jeans contrast with the group's attire- hand-sewn blouses and pangi skirts, the men wearing kamisas and capes draped diagonally across their torsos. The house music resumes. Liento, a teenaged member of the group dances along for his own amusement, his kawai ankle rattles sounding to the beat of the heavy bass.*

~ ~ ~

*Carmen is sitting on the steps outside Kifoko's rehearsal space. She came straight from work at Hotel Torarica and is among the first people to arrive at the rehearsal. I ask her how her new job as a housekeeper is going. It's not long before she's telling me all the senseless things about how the hotel runs its business. She laughs about the punch cards that the employees use to log their hours— how people wait around, even when there's nothing left to do, because they don't want to punch out early. The most disturbing facet to her is clearly the amount of wasted food the luxury hotel generates. She gets visibly upset as she describes the huge amount of food that gets thrown out every day, even though it is still perfectly good. Employees get in serious trouble if the management finds out they take the food home or eat it themselves instead of throwing it out. She shakes her head. Fresh fruit. Bread. Even expensive dishes like shrimp. Minutes before, these were laid out for guests. How can they waste such things in a place like this, where so many people are struggling?*

In the first vignette, Walsh hits upon many of the pejorative stereotypes of how Maroons respond to the conditions of the city, even while he expresses an affinity for the individuals he thereby describes. The Maroons in his account appear out of their element, overwhelmed by features of the hotel, their social habits running contrary to various conventions of cosmopolitan life. He depicts their wonder at experiences he and his projected readership would consider mundane, allowing 'us' to share a patronizing chuckle at the expense of his Maroon guests. With Walsh as their benefactor, these Maroons are given a glimpse into various practices of the privileged, but they remain both spectators and spectacle.

Over four decades later and despite bountiful evidence to the contrary, Maroons are still imagined to stick out, to be in one way or another awkward or 'uncivilized' in relation to the general populace, and their Creole counterparts in particular. Such views ignore the ways that Maroons

circulate within the cityscape. Far from the bewilderment of the Maroons depicted in the first quote, the members of Kifoko featured in the following two vignettes were cognizant, and at times critical, of the social and material features of the hotel's operation. As employers, employees, featured artists, patrons, and consumers, most Maroons circulate within the hotel and the city at large with a great deal of social savvy and cultural fluency. Their life practices, both mundane and creative, attest to their understanding of and engagement with their urban environment. This is not to say that as a group or as individuals they always blend in, but it would be a mistake to read those instances in which they are culturally conspicuous as patently accidental and unwitting.

On the other hand, living in the city and being a city person prove to be two separate things. We see this, for instance, in the dialogue presented at the very beginning of the chapter. Errol responds to the question, 'How do you feel to call yourself a Maroon' by saying:

> Well, the feeling…the feeling has to be in [yourself]. Because those…let's say…we don't say it to [make them] feel a [certain] way, but those…who live in the city here […] Then you know what I'm saying already. […] They won't feel it like you and I will feel it.

It is unclear from this passage whether Errol is speaking on a broad level about what it means to be the descendant of slaves, thereby distinguishing between Creoles and Maroons, or whether he is referring to Maroons who are long-time city residents, implying that their experience differs from his own, having only recently emigrated to the city[102]. The ambiguity did not appear to bother Mano, who responded to his interviewee with earnest affirmation. In either instance, the point is clear—the city provides the foil for constructions of Maroon cultural authenticity.

National Animosities, International Acclaim

[102] Mano had been a city resident for several years, but traveled to the interior settlements with some frequency.

In 2011, two years after Mano and Errol's playful interview, the Surinamese government recognized the 10th of October—the 'Day of the Maroons'—as a national holiday. In televised interviews, many Maroon public figures took care to stress that this day should be celebrated by all Surinamese citizens, as the beginning of a long process of attaining freedom from slavery. Yet informally, members of the Maroon community were largely critical of this all-encompassing approach. For a group of people with deep historical and symbolic ties with the act of escape, expressing pride not only of their freedom, but the *particular means* by which their ancestors achieved it is nearly tantamount to being proud to call oneself a Maroon.

Non-Maroon Surinamers were no less reluctant to embrace this political reimagining of the day's significance. Many among them voiced staunch disapproval of the day's new status as a national holiday, noting that the very treaties being celebrated included stipulations mandating that future escapees be brought back to the plantations from which they fled.[103] Thus, for some, observing the signing of the first such treaty was not as a cause for celebration, but rather an occasion that caused the resurfacing of feelings of betrayal, resentment, and hostility. For his part, president Desi Bouterse made clear his own attitude toward the event by not taking part in the day's festivities. Instead, on a day in which no one was supposed to work, he held a press conference with international investors.

While Creoles might feel the resurfacing of these animosities most acutely, I found it common for other ethnic groups within Suriname to voice their disapproval of the conditions under which the Maroons gained their freedom as a justification of their low opinion of contemporary Maroons in general. In the days following the holiday in 2011, this undercurrent of hostility and resentment was still palpable. A member of the all-Hindustani construction crew at work on the

[103] These stipulations are outlined in articles 4 and 5 in the 1760 treaty between the Colonial Government and the Ndyukas. (Groot 1977, 11.)

building next to where I was staying in Paramaribo made this clear enough; as he worked into the evening hours laying cement bricks, he repeated endlessly the same pronouncement to nobody in particular and anyone within hearing distance, "Waar zijn de Marrons, de weg-lopende besten?"—Where are the Maroons, the runaway beasts?

The unique circumstances under which Suriname's Maroon communities were founded and flourished was not, I found, a widely celebrated component of national pride or national culture. On the contrary, its celebration was quite contentious.[104] Their exceptional cultural history gains recognition and symbolic valence beyond national borders, as interpreted within the broader narrative of the African Diaspora.[105] In places where maroonage was not a feasible or successful course of action, the bravery and successes of first-generation Maroons can be appreciated more abstractly. Maroons can be embraced as symbols of courage and resistance without the emotional complications of intertwining fates, and a historical memory of the consequences of maroonage experienced by plantation slaves. This 'specialness' of the Maroons' cultural and historical legacy is further supported by tourists and scholars, whose interests and enquiries into Maroon lifeways far outweigh their expressed curiosity about those of Suriname's urban-based populations.[106]

Paul Christopher Johnson writes, "As a global culture of diaspora has emerged, it has been adopted by different diasporic cultures for their own purposes, even as the circulation and adoption

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[104] In Chapter 3, I describe the cultural presentational strategies of the national performing group, Alakondre Dron, in which the Maroons are certainly included, reinforcing the message, 'many cultures, one people.' Yet such presentations of national culture are, in and of themselves, products geared toward international consumption. I would argue that their overall message of unity is intrinsically tied to their functional role as a cultural export.

[105] Maroon society in Suriname has been shaped by the country's physical and political environment, from the 17th century to the present. Accordingly, the shaping and circulation of Surinamese Maroon cultural identities exhibit features in common with contemporary Maroon populations in other environments, as well as many important differences. Kenneth Bilby's *True-Born Maroons* (2006) offers an enlightening comparison, through his insightful account of the history of maroonage in Jamaica and the ways in which maroon symbolism has taken shape and circulated in a different local context.

[106] Like the Maroons, Suriname's various Amerindian populations have also garnered international attention, particularly in relation to tourism.

of such terms has changed the very ways group identities are made and maintained (Johnson 2007, 9-10)." The transnational imagined community[107] of the African Diaspora has undoubtedly shaped Maroon cultural politics and strategies of representation in distinctive ways, with Maroons' place of symbolic privilege in the discourse of the African Diaspora providing, at times, a stark contrast to the thinly veiled hostility they face as a minority group in an ethnically charged national sociality.

## PERFORMANCE CONTEXTS

I close this chapter by bringing the focus once again to the Maroon cultural performance groups active within Paramaribo, and in particular the events for which they are frequently hired to perform. Important performance opportunities are created through the celebration of national holidays, or public demonstrations of national culture, however the following sections are devoted to events that are geared toward a specifically Maroon audience. While the cultural richness of their longstanding, predominantly rural-based traditions has long been acknowledged, the following events contribute to an urban social practice that is also distinctly Maroon. As with their rural counterparts, aspects of the physical environment in which they take place have a significant impact on the structure and content of these events.

### Nyun Combe and Urban Burial Practices

Many Maroons consider frequenting Nyun Combe a distasteful activity, due to the poor, somewhat unsanitary conditions of the building and the few but conspicuous drunkards and junkies who frequent the place, attracted by the ready availability of alcohol and idle conversation. For earlier generations of urban immigrants, Nyun Combe provided a temporary shelter. Nowadays,

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[107] Anderson 1991.

most urban immigrants have a series of connections, most of all family relations, already established within the city. The space is most frequently used as a venue for funerary rites. Particularly with the death of an elder, the family and loved ones of the deceased generally prefer to have the burial and funerary rites take place in their village or the land belonging to members of their *bee*, yet circumstances do not always allow, and transporting the corpse back to a village is at times prohibitively expensive.[108] There are a few other venues within the city limits where people can congregate to observe the rituals related to the burial and mourning of the dead, yet of these, Nyun Combe is the largest and most well known. In its function as a funeral home of sorts, Nyun Combe plays host to a wide variety of music and dance, from *apinti* drumming, the performance of *tuka* funerary music and dance, to popular musical genres including *kaseko*, *aleke*, and *kawina*. Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba have all performed at services at Nyun Combe.[109]

Competition Culture

The importance of performance competitions within Paramaribo is readily apparent through TV broadcasting, radio advertisements, and posters and flyers displayed throughout the city. Competitive events range from street dance battles to beauty pageants. Many such events are broadcast over television, and later put atop DVD's and sold commercially.

Urban Maroon competition culture consists of an amalgam of events, including beauty pageants, talent contests, and performance competitions, with almost exclusively Maroon participants and audiences. These are a subset of a broader competition culture within Suriname, where contests often cater to a single ethnic group, enforcing preexisting social and political divisions among the country's diverse population.

[108] As the numbers of Maroons living in the Netherlands or elsewhere in Europe increases, families often pay to have the corpse of a loved one flown back to Suriname.

[109] Saisa performed in this space frequently, Fiamba intermittently, and Kifoko only rarely.

To give an example of the range of competition events, there is the Sa Alida Contest, a multi-talent competition for young Creole girls, Suriname's Miss India Pageant, as well as comparable competitions for Suriname's sizeable Amerindian, Chinese, and Javanese populations. Added to these events are talent-based competitions that draw upon a more diverse ethnic makeup—these include hip-hop dance battles and the widely popular Youth Voice competition, a song contest for school children that is loosely modeled after American Idol.

Of the events that comprise Maroon competition culture, many of them involved the performance of at least one dance genre included in the repertoire Kifoko, Saisa, or Fiamba, and most often multiple genres that could be termed traditionally Maroon would be featured at some point in the evening. During the time of my fieldwork, dance competitions were held for *loketo*, *awasa,* and *bandammba*, and an *aleke* song competition was also held. Such contests involve the distillation of a range of performance skills and aesthetic values into distinct categories, in which adherence to stylistic norms of the genre are considered alongside assessments of a performer's talent and overall crowd appeal. While tradition tends to be a point of emphasis in such contests, they are a much better gauge of contemporary performance trends and personal innovations, the process of adapting a given performance tradition to a staged contest format has itself sparked new innovative trends.[110] Most often, these competitions draw contestants from the youth population, however this depended somewhat on the specific contest.

*Fojali Oso*'s – Birthday Parties

[110] A good example of this is the way that the kawina band, Wi Sani, has popularized the practice of including a brief interlude of a different genre within a given piece. They have developed and capitalized on a practice of melding kawina and bandammba in dialogue with Paramaribo's Annual Bandammba Contest. These interludes are further discussed in Chapter 5.

Of the many events within the Maroon community for which groups are commissioned to perform, birthday parties are distinctive in that, by and large, they are the purview of the city. Observing the year of a person's birth only became a standard practice among the Maroons in the 1960's, when the Creole politician Joseph Adolf Pengel launched an initiative to register Maroons to vote, in an effort to establish a political majority over the dominant Hindustani party (*Vooruitstrevende Hervormingspartij*, or VHP).[111] The ritual of honoring the day of a person's birth is a practice that has not been incorporated to a great extent by Maroons within the interior—when birthdays are observed, it tends not to be as big an event as those that occur with relative frequency in Paramaribo. While a Maroon birthday party, or *fojali oso*, bears some similarities in character and activities to birthday celebrations among other ethnic groups in Suriname and abroad, elements including the party attire, food, song and dance all mark these events as distinctly Maroon.[112]

Especially for a person celebrating a landmark birthday, *fojali oso's* warrant a lot of preparation, and are attended by a large number of guests. These events are typically hosted at an individual's private residence, with most of the visitors occupying the house's yard and porch. The largest and most elaborate events I attended took place larger spaces—for instance a bar/restaurant or a political party's headquarters. Extra tables and chairs are brought in for visitors, streamers and other decorations strung from any available post or railing. Guests can expect to be served a meal and drinks (the most common meals include Maroon adaptations of the Indonesian dishes, *bami* (fried noodles) or *nasi* (fried rice), served with chicken), and to witness some form of entertainment. A celebrant's female relatives circulate among the crowd, offering drinks and food, clearing away plates, and trying to accommodate visitors as best they can. Those with the means to do so often

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[111] (Personal Communication, Cyril Eersteling, 10/10/09).

[112] For an early account of Creole birthday celebrations, see Herskovits and Herskovits 1936, 32-35; for a contemporary account, see Caprino 1992, 66.

hire multiple groups to provide entertainment. These *fojali osos* are typically all-night affairs, starting around sundown and most often continuing into the early hours of the morning.

For the most part*Fojali osos* are more modest in size and scope than funerary rites or other events within the Maroon community that might warrant the solicitation of a performance troupe. They can be arranged with relatively little advance notice, seldom involving travel outside of the city. Such events are generally considered a source of light entertainment. Consequently, these parties generate a large number of performance opportunities for cultural performance groups, which can be mobilized with relatively little advance notice.

At times, groups' performances are personalized, reflecting the character or interests of the person being honored. During a performance, dancers show deference to the celebrated individual, encouraging her[113] to dance along, or dancing directly in front of her. Some such events are tailored to the character and interests of the individual being celebrated. When Laetitia Tojo returned to Suriname with her family to celebrate her 50th birthday, Kifoko, which was founded by her husband, paid her a special tribute by presenting a theatrical work devoted to the *awasa* dance. Saisa was hired to perform for a birthday party for a woman who was known for her connection to the vodu/papa obia, the snake spirit. By special request, this *fojali oso* concluded with a *winti pee*, the performance of ritual drumming associated with her particular *obia.*

Most *fojali osos* have a designated color scheme, of which the person's social circle is notified in days and weeks preceding the party. The practice of creating outfits out of a uniform cloth, chosen for a specific event, is also a part of several other Maroon traditions and celebrations, for instance the *Broko dei,* a funerary rite marking the end of a period of grieving a loved one. In both contexts, those women closest to the individual being celebrated create outfits out of the same cloth. These range from simple pangi wrap skirts, worn with a coordinating blouse, to elaborate dresses or

[113] Usually, the celebrant was female. Adult men seldom celebrated their birthdays with these elaborate events.

two-piece ensembles with ornately folded head wraps. These events constitute a veritable fashion show, a chance for attendees to showcase their creativity, the crowd inevitably running the gamut of the latest fashion trends. While some men incorporate the color scheme into their outfits, the most of them do not.

Not only does this practice create a visual show of solidarity and affiliation among attendees and a platform for individual creativity and style sense, it also adds another element to the event's associative framework. After the event has concluded, when an attendee dons her outfit or sees another individual wearing the particular cloth designated for that occasion, memories of the event often resurface, along with thoughts about the person in honor of whom the event was held. I certainly experienced these associations at work, my collection of *pangis* serving as a record of significant events that I had attended, friendships and social connections that had been enforced by the various *pangis* I had been given. It was clear that similar associations were at place for members of the Maroon community. Standing with friends or group-mates, shortly after our eyes trailed a passerby who was sporting a cloth from an event that we had attended, it often happened that conversation would switch and settle on what had transpired on that occasion.

# Group Profiles

# Introduction to Group Profiles

One of the central points of this dissertation is that individuals actively define and personalize the culture(s) to which they belong; that through daily, embodied practice and decision making, we do not simply figure out how we relate to tradition as an external set of social norms and principles, we determine their meaning, relevance, and character. Through their involvement in Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba, performers translate facets of Maroon performance culture in such a way that it says something personal about them and their place in society as a whole—both in relation to those who participate in shared cultural activities and others with whom they come into contact through personal interaction or some other media.

While initially I had thought to make one group, Kifoko, the focus of this study, the task of identifying and interpreting the choices each group makes became much easier when put into conversation with other groups making different choices. Through working with all three groups, I came to better appreciate the finer points of how performance groups are run, and the myriad options available for so many seemingly small, or even insignificant decisions. A cursory description of Kifoko, Fiamba, and Saisa would leave all three sounding more or less interchangeable, but as these details about their practices accumulate, it becomes clear that they each provide a different view not only of Maroon 'traditional' or 'cultural' performance, but also on the ways that life is experienced as a Maroon in Paramaribo.

As much as these groups can shed light on broad social phenomena, members were drawn to them in large part for the distinctive social atmosphere each one created, whether in rehearsal or performance. Beyond the wide array of differences a trained eye and ear distinguish between the three groups' performances, for me, the experience of participation in performances and rehearsals *felt* quite different. The atmosphere that each group fosters through the informal interactions as well

as the structured elements of a rehearsal can have a tremendous impact on who becomes involved in which group. It provides a crucial conduit through which people come to understand themselves as belonging to a collective that is concerned not only with performance, culture, and tradition, but also with each other. In turn, spectators for whom a performance is their first exposure to Maroon culture rely on a group's manner of communication and overall rapport to inform their understanding of the cultural community more broadly conceived, and the role of performance therein.

In reading these profiles, it is important to keep in mind that these groups are ever-changing. What I describe here identifies each group at a specific point in their lifespan. Their goals and priorities are created in dialogue with the events and social conditions that connect them to broader Maroon and city networks, as well as the changing membership, aspirations, interests, and life circumstances of those within the group. Indeed, it will become apparent in reading these profiles that Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba have all shifted in significant ways from the ways each group was run in its initial stages, whether in terms of repertoire, group organization, or through confronting new and unforeseen opportunities and challenges.

## Group Classifications

Although Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba are generally acknowledged to belong to the same category, naming that category is a difficult task. The basic components are clear enough—all three groups have an overwhelming Maroon majority membership, they perform a variety of genres, and those genres are predominantly if not exclusively Maroon. Performances feature song, dance, and percussion components, but can incorporate theatre or public speaking as well. The groups are associated with Surinamese Maroon culture on a broad level, rather than with any particular

subgroup.[114] Even when, as with Kifoko, the core repertoire was comprised of Maroon genres from one specific subgroup, I found that groups preferred not to draw explicit attention to this characteristic, perhaps allowing them the option of branching out, should they wish to incorporate additional genres.[115] Such broad identifications have the added advantage of taking attention away from challenges to a group's 'authenticity' due to performers belonging to a Maroon subgroup other than the Maroon subgroup from which a given performance genre originated. (Nonetheless, among Maroon audiences, this issue is frequently raised in assessments of a group's knowledge and performance style.)[116]

Despite so many shared components, group members and the broader public referred to these groups using a variety of names, among them Maroon groups, dance groups, Maroon cultural dance groups, *awasa* groups, social-cultural associations, and traditional Maroon dance groups. The term or terms used to identify a group tends to reflect the context of the utterance, and what is at stake for the speaker. The category of '*awasa* group,' for instance, might be used among Maroons or Surinamers familiar with various local and regional dance forms, or in a situation in which the speaker wished to stress that a given group is one of many. Promoters frequently use this descriptor when referring to a group that is performing at an event in which a variety of styles will be featured, for instance an evening concert or as featured entertainment at a music, dance, or beauty competition. '*Awasa* group' is a less useful descriptor when speaking to someone who is unfamiliar

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[114] Nonetheless, the strong presence of performance genres of the Ndyuka Maroons, including awasa, songe, and aleke, is part of a wider trend of the Ndyuka performing arts getting the greatest public exposure within Paramaribo. Some scholars, including anthropologist Soloman Emmanuels, consider this a result of the closer similarities between the language families of Eastern Maroon groups, including the Ndyuka, and Paramaribo's lingua franca, Sranan Tongo. (Personal communication, Emmanuels, 2009.)

[115] Occasionally Kifoko performances would include Seketi songs, a mainstay of the Saramakan performance repertoire, sung by a Saramakan woman in the group, but no rehearsal time was devoted to these songs. They also experimented with new choreographies, called "Kikri" (Kifoko Creations), that were based on African dance aesthetics as learned through touring and the popular media.

[116] See Chapter 4 for relevant discussion classificatory anomalies and the challenges to authenticity that frequently arise as a result.

with Maroon culture, or if the speaker wished to highlight the breadth or flexibility of a group's repertoire. To cite another example, Kifoko and Fiamba have often referred to themselves as "social cultural associations,"[117] thereby communicating significantly about the groups' intent, but less about their activities or repertoire.

This terminological ambiguity makes it possible for groups to accommodate changes in repertoire over time, or to allow for more complex interpretations of cultural practice. A key characteristic in the way that classifications are used is that they are applied retroactively– their use is descriptive (to characterize the genres that are already established within their performance repertoire) rather than a prescriptive nature, in which categories might determine which genres suit a group's stated purpose and scope.

As a case in point, *loketo*, a popular dance genre from the Congo, is one of Fiamba's featured genres. As Fiamba founder Louise Wondel explained it in an interview:

> LW: Loketo [is an] African dance. And we are African people who were left here in Suriname. So we are doing, uh, this thing—African dances also. Loketo is an African dance.
>
> CC: But you have many African dances. Why do the people from Suriname care more for loketo?
>
> LW: They care more for loketo because the loketo…let's say loketo is popular here. But other dances haven't become popular in Suriname as has loketo.
>
> CC: Do you think that [Surinamese Maroons] think of it as their own culture?
>
> LW: Yah man. Yeah.[118]

[117] In Dutch, "sociaal culturele vereniging." For historical implications this word might have, refer to Mosis's usage of the term in his 'History of Kifoko,' Appendix A.

[118] Personal communication, August 30, 2009.

As Wondel tells it, *loketo* is a style of music that draws on an African aesthetic of which Suriname Maroons feel very much a part. Even though the dance is of Congolese origin, Fiamba's performance of it within a Surinamese context helps to solidify Maroons cultural affiliations that are internationally formed and locally realized.[119] Through such associations, ideas that are part of groups' standard lexicon—among them 'tradition' and 'culture'—can be complicated in useful ways. If an audience member understands Fiamba as a Maroon cultural group, and then witnesses the group performing *loketo*, he or she might be led to think about Maroon culture in a broader sense.

Groups can also use these various names to draw distinctions between one another. In comparing groups, such factors as the inclusion or exclusion of a certain performance style, a rehearsal practice, or a certain kind of gig in a group's regular agenda can all be cited as essential points of differentiation. In reflecting on the longevity of Maroon traditional dance forms, Kifoko's artistic director, Eddie Lante, was quoted in a tourist publication as saying, "[These dance styles] continue still, but you see that we are now the only group, while earlier there were three or four."[120] At other times, Kifoko's similarities to multiple groups active within the city, among them Saisa, Tangiba, Fiamba, and Denku, were made explicit. Nonetheless, Lante's statement cannot be discounted outright because he did not specify what "kind" of group he considers Kifoko to be in the first place, and by what criterion a group could qualify as being alike.

## LINGERING QUESTIONS

Yet a dilemma remains: How do we place the activities of Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba in dialogue with culture-oriented dance groups in other locales? What existing terms and theories

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[119] Another potential reason for a stronger connection to this dance genre of Congolese origin is that many Africans who were brought to Suriname as slaves came from ports in this region. (Postma 2003.)

[120] "Het duurt nog wel even, maar je ziet dat wij nu nog de enige group zijn, terwijl er vroeger drie tot vier waren." Maja Haanskorf, "Muziek van de Marowijne" in *Te Gast in Suriname*, ed. Harry Schuring. Nijmegen, Netherlands: Informatie Verre Reizen VOF, 2009. 41-46.

about cultural performance and presentation can inform our understanding of these groups' activities? Placing these locally conceived groups into international dialogue entails additional lexical and theoretical considerations. An investigation into the terms used to describe performance groups and how they communicate in and about culture can shed light on several questions that are fundamental to this study: What it is that cultural performance groups do? What are performers,' audiences,' and scholars' various interests in these groups? And why and how do groups' activities matter on broader social, cultural, economic, and political levels?

The terms 'folk', 'folklore', and 'folklorism'[121] permeate both scholarly and vernacular discourse about performance genres that foster a deliberate link to cultural practice. Given that 'folklore' was deliberately constructed out of the exoticist impulses and socio-political agendas Nineteenth Century Europe,[122] any attempts to bestow upon the term greater specificity or to delineate its principal characteristics are dubious at the outset. Perhaps *because* these terms arise out of a blatantly fabricated and inherently problematic notion, they have proven to be particularly malleable categories. At the same time, folk-related terminology has remained of great (though complicated) significance for numerous populations, and for political, educational, and commercial organizations worldwide.[123] Given their pervasive use in a wide range of social registers, notions of folklore and folklorism have the potential to draw attention to the links between academicians and the populations whose social practices are likely to be so categorized.

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[121] This body of terms is commonly referred to as folkloristics.

[122] Abrahams 2005, 59; Roginsky 2007, 41.

[123] Of course, it should be remembered that, often, cultural practitioners also theorize classificatory concepts and delimit the conditions of their use. Katherine Hagedorn calls attention to one striking example in the cultural ruminations of Rogelio Martínez Furé, artistic advisor to Cuba's Conjunto Folklorico. Martínez Furé distinguished between 'positive' and 'negative folklore,' suggesting that the 'cultural values' characteristic of 'positive folklore' could be separated from the 'idealistic' and predominantly religious content of 'negative folklore.' Through such extrapolations, Martínez Furé posited, "[Cultural forms] can be purified, and given a new revolutionary function." (Martínez Furé 1979, 267, quoted in Hagedorn 2001, 174.)

An influential early framework for categorizing dance was Felix Hoerburger's concept of first existence and second existence folk dances, introduced in a short article in the *Journal of the International Folk Music Council* in 1968.[124] Drawing on German conceptions of folklore that were then in use (Hoerburger 1968 30; Smidchens 1999, 52-53), Hoerburger defined folk dance in its first existence as, "Chiefly an integral part of the life of a community. It has an important function in the community. And to take it away from it is essentially to damage the life of the community." In contrast, second existence performance, "…is no longer an integral part of community life. It is not the property of the whole community any more, but only of a few interested people-as an occupation of their leisure time; as a hobby; as a sport; as a means of inter-human understanding; as a colourful performance or show; and so on." As outlined by Hoerburger, first existence performance is associated with improvisation, learning through immersion, and a performance objective related to social function within a bounded community, while second existence is characterized by choreographic fixity, learning through specialist teachers, and conceptions of performance as entertainment.

It is easy to complicate this rather tidy model by questioning, for instance, whether entertainment is devoid of social function, or by considering the ways that such a schema might undermine the existence of specialists and pedagogical techniques at work within otherwise first existence contexts.[125] Nonetheless, Hoerburger draws what has become a lasting distinction between integrated social function and "show"—a differentiation which folklorist Andriy

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[124] Hoerburger 1968, 30-32.

[125] Hoerburger did acknowledge, however, that aspects of first and second existence performance were often present within the same genre, or even the same performance. As he noted, "In practice, there is no definite contrast between these two categories […] In reality there are many shades and intermediate stages (Hoerburger, 1968: 30)." Nonetheless, by defining these 'existences' as separate and fundamentally constituitive of such elements as individualized versus group social transmission and the opposition of entertainment and social function, I posit that, even when these categories are not discussed as absolutes, it is impossible to use them without also incorporating these (often) false dichotomies.

Nahachewsky identifies as the performer's degree of self-consciousness, or "reflectiveness" (Nahachewsky 2001, 19).

This difference between performing within a tradition and a performance as a demonstration of tradition extends beyond 'first existence' and 'second existence' classifications to a number of related fields and concepts. Adrienne Kaeppler, for instance, identifies a similar shift in consciousness as the fundamental distinction between theatre and ritual:

> The basic difference [between theatre and ritual] is that in theatre the acts *are* encoded by the performers and rather than the performance itself being the message, the message is *derived* from the performance. In theatre the performers do understand what they are doing, and it is the product—not the process of performing—that is the message. Although process and product are important in both ritual and theatre, in ritual the process is primary; in theatre, the product is primary.
>
> Kaeppler 2006, 190. Emphasis original.

Similarly, folklorist Guntis Smidchens cites the "conscious recognition and repetition of tradition (1999, 56)" as a defining characteristic of 'folklorism,' a term that operates in much the same way as does Hoerburger's 'second existence.' Both Roginsky and Hagedorn draw attention to the fluid interchanges that often exist between these levels of performance awareness. Roginsky does this through discussing the synchronized occurrence of these two strains within a performance context or by the same population; Hagedorn through her discussions of folkloricization—the process whereby a performance genre transitions from existing as folklore to more the more representational idiom of folklorism ((Roginsky 2007, 44), (Hagedorn 2001, 68).

While considerable attention has been given to shifts in the performers' awareness and the apparently more constructed nature of folkloric performance (as opposed to the performance of folklore), until recently, very little attention has been given to the ways the social analyst—the person who invokes a classificatory term—is implicated in *both* categories of performance. For something to be designated as folklore (as opposed to tradition) implies that certain judgments are

being placed upon the group that makes use of these practices—performers are first designated (usually by outsiders exercising some degree of power of those in question) as "the folk." Therefore, 'folklore' implies the viewing of an insider group, as though they were unaware of being viewed, from an outsider position. 'Folklorism,' on the other hand, connotes a performance given by cultural insiders with an awareness of and, often, deference to cultural outsiders, and is often criticized as being compromised or diluted as a result. By extension, the act of classifying a cultural entity as folkloric is, in itself, a kind of folkloricization (Bausinger [1971] 1990),[126] but one in which the performers are likely to have little or no part in determining the outcome. By ignoring their own subject position, cultural outsiders who use these categories risk assuming the powerful and dubious position of looking on with voyeuristic omniscience, while being invisible to the performers. Cultural insiders who use these categories in relation to their own traditions assert a subject position that reads as, in some sense, marginal to the 'folk,' if by no other means than their ability to speak on the population's behalf.[127]

Another enduring implication that is present in Hoerburger's 'existence' model is the chronological ordering of different kinds of performance. Nahachewsky has usefully challenged the implicit assumption that first existence performance must always precede second existence performance, or that it consists exclusively of dances in their 'originary' forms. One of the most widely known models that counteracts this chronological tendency was proposed by Richard Schenchner and Victor Turner, in which social and staged (or 'aesthetic') drama are depicted in an ongoing process of mutual information and regeneration.[128]

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[126] Roginsky suggests the presence of an ethnographer could be enough to change the performance conditions from folklore to folklorism (Roginsky 2007: 43). As Roginsky notes, Hermann Bausinger goes further, stating, "folklore today cannot appear except in the mutative form of folklorism. (Bausinger [1971] 1990,152)."

[127] Spivak 1988.

[128] From Turner 1985: 300.

Nahachewsky is one of several scholars who have implemented the terms 'participatory' and 'presentational,' in place of first and second existence, respectively.[129]

The descriptors 'participatory' and 'presentational' effectively subdue the chronological implications of Hoerburger's model, yet I take issue with many of the specific characterizations Nahachewsky uses to distinguish one from the other. While the performances of groups like Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba would fall into what Nahachewsky designates as presentational dance, group members would likely object to many of his classificatory distinctions—to cite one: "[In participatory dances], a good dance differs from a less successful performance based on how it *feels*. Presentational dances tend to be perceived more as a product than a process. The success of a particular performance is judged by how it *looks*."[130] Post-performance conversations and appraisals among group members were as likely to center around issues of the atmosphere or energy that the group helped to generate as they were devoted to considerations of appearance. Given the different opinions that I would expect among members of a single group, even in relation to a single event, I would be surprised if sufficient consensus exists among other groups to substantiate Nahachewsky's claims on any broad scale. Likewise, I am sure there are plenty of performers who, in 'participatory' contexts, value how their dancing 'looks' as much as, or more than (indeed, even as inseparable from) the dance's social function.

The questions become more pronounced—if these terms do not join context and content in a reliable way, on what criteria, and what assumptions, are they based? What are such terms intended to distinguish or illuminate? While it is possible to find fine points of differentiation between predominantly participatory versus predominantly presentational settings, these categories

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[129] Ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino, for instance, uses these terms in his 2000 publication, *Cosmopolitans, Nationalists, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe.* See Turino, 2000: 46, and Nahachewsky 1995.

[130] Nahachewsky 1995, 1. Emphasis original.

do not do much to clarify the performance content or pedagogical attributes of groups like Kifoko, Saisa, or Fiamba. Fueled by the social sciences' reflexive turn in the 1980's, scholars including Bausinger, Kirschemblatt-Gimblett, Handler, and Abrahams have all contributed to a serious critique of the power relations that are enacted through such classification systems, and subsequently undertaken the challenge of deconstructing and re-envisioning performance practices as undertaken for insular communities and their Others.[131]

Dance historian Nancy Lee Chalfa Ruyter opens her article, "Musings on Folk Dance" by stating, "The purpose of this discussion is not to reopen basic questions about what can be definitively included in the terms "folk" or "folk dance," but rather to consider some of the manifestations of what is called folk dance." Ruyter's work takes part in a productive shift that has begun to take place, in which searches for stand-alone classificatory definitions are supplanted by inquiries into when, how, and why categories are invoked.[132] The works that I have found most useful in situating these Surinamese performance groups globally have in common an interest in the functions of various categories in social discourse, rather than in arbitrating their content in any sort of definitive fashion. Such approaches highlight what I consider a key point: to a large degree, it is the environment of performance and the reaction of the audience members that determines its interactive contours.

Folklorist and anthropologist Roger D. Abrahams is among the scholars whose work indicates how and why a situational approach could be especially illuminating, and is worth quoting at length:

> Folklore must be enacted, as it exists nowhere outside of performance. For folklore to work effectively in performance, there must be *a consonance between the situation, the item to come*

[131] Significantly, Richard and Sally Price address similar representational issues in the visual arts in their work, perhaps most obviously in *Equatoria* (1992), and concerning the international dissemination of Maroon arts more broadly in *On the Mall* (1994).

[132] See also: Regina Bendix (1992, 1997).

> *to mind, and the enactment.* Competent performers recognize the situation as it arises, know the appropriate traditions, and have the ability to give voice and body to the replay. Such concerns are both constraining and liberating. The performer must pick an item that explores an appropriate theme, calls for the proper level of diction, and has a pertinent message. The item's internal characteristics must also make an appropriate, judicious, and economical comment on the situation.
>
> Folklore performance may appear to impose delicate and difficult demands on the speaker, but in practice this is not the case. *The group's conventions associate certain sets of problems with specific sets of expressive forms. In fact, the situation often calls for a particular performance, since such enactments encapsulate a problem and propose a solution.* This almost reflexive response is apparent in the operations of devices like proverbs and superstitions. These short traditional statements emerge when a dilemma has come to notice and a conventional solution occurs to someone that at least deserves mention. Wise sayings, old saws, or tried and true remedies are recalled. Obviously, the vernacular provides names for these common conditions, and that commonplace phrasing suggests that the problem is not unique and there are courses of practice that have proven useful in the past. Of course, these sayings are couched in a form which suggests that the solution is as old as the hills.
> (Emphasis mine. Abrahams 2005, 59-60.)

Here, Abrahams focuses on the social conditions, or 'dilemmas,' to which folklore is a response, while additionally acknowledging that choosing the most fitting folkloric 'piece' for that situation demonstrates the social adeptness of the performer. This 'enactment-centered' approach (Bendix 1997, 196) has the benefit of recognizing continuity in performance and social function among audiences and performance scenarios that Hoerburger and his predecessors have represented as categorical opposites. By focusing on its functional properties while recognizing the content as a fragile construction of projections of geographic and temporal distance, we can consider invocations of 'folk' as indications of dilemmas or situations in which people benefit from invoking familiar social categories and historical processes. Folkloric performance comes about not only because of a consumer demand, but as a way to assert order upon circumstances as they arise.

Despite being a very different sort of performance than a proverb or superstition, I posit that, as with performances of folklore more generally, performances of folklorism can be considered a response to certain sets of social conditions. In this light, folkloric performance might be used to ease tensions between cultural autonomy and urban dependence, or between tradition and

innovation.[133] I see the various incidents of folkloric performance's occurrence as united by the need for an apparatus through which present circumstances can be historicized and contextualized within a continuous social and cultural fabric. Guntis Smidchens described it thus:

> There is a human need, heightened in the modern world, for the knowledge of history (Strobach 1982: 36), which is tied to a nostalgic feeling of historical continuity with past generations (Frykman and Lofgren 1987: 33-35). There also exists a nostalgic need to imagine a simpler "counterworld" to the hectic, chaotic life of the modern world (Bausinger [1971] 1990: 145). Folklorism fills that need, representing folklore self-consciously ("objectified"—Handler 1988:13), accepting it as a carrier of the past and the premodern world, and bringing an impression of unchanging, stable tradition into the present. (Smidchens 1999, 56.)

Smidchens's comments shed light on the "need" for linking historical continuity in performance practices to constructions of the past that indulge fictional imaginations of the pre-modern—whether on the part of performers, onlookers, or both. As Smidchens describes it, a person's political, ethnic, or economic orientations might inform his or her level of interest in these activities, but the experience of a folkloric performance can affect tourists and cultural insiders equally, if differently. Paramaribo is a place where this kind of cultural work or "working out" is a recurring theme, a point of focus and interest not only for the Maroons, but for people –Surinamese citizens and visitors—to whom the issue of how multiculturality is to 'work' in an ethnically diverse country like Suriname is a compelling issue.

Instead of considering the mode of presentation in terms of inherent characteristics in the practice and performance of tradition, and using the stage and the village as opposite extremes to index various differences in approach, scholars including Roginsky and Abrahams offer analytical frames that put the emphasis on the circumstances under which 'folklore' is called to existence, and what social functions are activated through folkloric practices. I find these authors' approaches a far

[133] The tension between tradition and innovation can indeed lead to exciting and creative performances and reimaginings of traditional material and ideas, but it can be uncomfortable as well. I think that folklorism concerns itself with representations that are intended to be consumed comfortably and lead to resolution, thus affirming the existing 'order of things,' reading present circumstances in light of the past.

better fit for the performance activities of groups like Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba, for which the same presentational strategies and rehearsal practices resulted in performances that varied considerably in their social function and overall character. Clearly, then, there exists some continuity in the content not only of the traditions being performed, but the manner of their realization that is not as heavily dictated by context as Nahachewsky's or Hoerburger's model might suggest.

In keeping with a situational perspective, we should not forget that, whatever dimensions are assigned to transnational classifiers like folklore and folklorism, these concepts resonate differently depending on who enacts them, and the social circumstances of the enactment. To give an example, Smidchens observes that expressions of folklore contribute to fulfilling specific needs that are grounded in widely shared social and emotional processes. Yet a demonstration of historical connection might have a distinctive character in the present study. Among Surinamese Maroons, historical endurance is, in itself, value-laden; connections with history are literally and figuratively imbued with properties of psychological and spiritual strength. While I would argue performers and audiences, both rural and urban, are generally aware of some of the problematic associative baggage that 'the folk' retains in relation to its genesis in a19$^{th}$ Century European social climate, invocations of the 'premodern' can be, in some contexts, more strongly associated with feelings of empowerment or cultural pride on the part of those whose cultural legacy is thereby represented.

# Chapter 3: Kifoko

In September 2011, former Kifoko group leader José Tojo returned to Paramaribo from the Netherlands on vacation. While on his visit, he was a key organizer and co-director of an introductory course for girls and young women, focusing on two of the most popular styles of Surinamese Maroon music and dance—*awasa* and *bandammba*.[134] Kifoko was crucially involved in the entire affair, providing musical accompaniment for the dancers throughout their weeks of classes. I arrived in Paramaribo on a follow-up research visit just in time to witness the final rehearsals and the presentation that marked the culmination of the course.

The performance program opened in an unprecedented way. For the first time I had ever witnessed, the performers assembled on stage for a warm-up exercise, in front of their seated audience. Although Kifoko rehearsals typically started with warm-ups, I had never seen the touring members of the group warm up before performance, much less on the performance stage. Yet that night, José led Kifoko members and course participants alike through a series of standing stretches and light cardiovascular exercises, all accompanied by Kifoko's drummers.

[134] See Appendix C for more information on *bandammba*.

**Figure 5**: José Tojo leading warm-ups with Kifoko and the participants of the Bandammba and Awasa Training Course, in front of a seated audience, September, 2011.

By performing their warm-ups for an audience, the group began their evening of Maroon dance with an activity that was neither dance, nor recognizably tied to Maroon culture.[135] Beyond its utilitarian function of helping limber up the performers and get their circulation flowing, these exercises communicated to the audiences and dancers alike a certain approach to performing. The exercises implied that the performance to follow was, to some degree, 'serious work' that required preparation. By extension, they conveyed that the assembled performers were 'serious workers,' that they were preparing to exert themselves in the dances to follow. Furthermore, by coordinating their movements with the other members of the group, each performer helped to articulate group cohesiveness—a togetherness in time and space. As they leaned and stretched and balanced and jogged, they did so in straight lines, with performers neatly staggered so everyone was in view. From the outset, then, what was on display that night was more than young performers' developing proficiencies in traditional genres. These young women were learning the practice of belonging to a

[135] In performances that I had seen among Maroon audiences, people would transition from casually standing with a group to intensive performance with hardly any preparation of transition from one to the other. From interviews and written accounts, my impression is that this is common practice.

dance group, and developing the presentational sensibilities and movement practices (both Maroon and non-Maroon) that belonging entailed.

In this chapter, I explore some of the creative and social practices that made belonging to Kifoko distinctive from other performance groups. Beyond the initial task of giving a descriptive account of the group, I have two primary goals. First, I want to demonstrate the ways in which the embodied expressions of Maroon tradition that Kifoko members learned and conveyed to audiences existed *simultaneously* with embodied expressions of cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and professionalism. Through examining their combination, I want to explore how they affect the expressive and receptive technologies of physically situated performers. This, in turn, makes clear the ways in which Kifoko is ensconced in a particular kind of social signification that is much more complicated than the group's seemingly straightforward mission of 'exploring, documenting, and disseminating Bush Negro [Maroon] culture' might first appear.

Second, I will demonstrate the benefits of considering the private and semi-private activities of groups that are normally encountered through their public face. We cannot take for granted that public performance is the most important or significant facet of a performance group's activities, nor that it is members' primary motivation for involvement in these organizations. The concepts of practice, routines, and performance all have both projected and internalized dimensions. The fluidity and coexistence of the outward- and inward-looking aspects of these concepts are often more clearly understood through a long-term engagement with rehearsal space as a fieldsite. In Kifoko, the care with which ideas were conveyed and put into bodily practice was demonstrated through members' physical actions and interactions, as well as being made explicit as group leaders verbalized how ideas and ideals could be enacted. I argue that the inverse is also evident; that, in this setting, embodied action was a way in which performers formulated ideas and ideals.

Founding

In the years following Suriname's military coup, as the economic consequences of severing ties with the Netherlands began to take its toll, national pride became a crucial ingredient in political discourse. On Christmas Eve, 1982, immediately after Dutch aid was definitively severed,[136] Desi Bouterse gave a rousing address to the public, sharing with them his vision of Suriname as an autonomous political state:

> What we will have is what we ourselves will have built; what we will value is what we ourselves can defend; what we shall get is what we will wrest for ourselves; what we shall be is what we will have made of ourselves. We have chosen to be a free and prosperous people and that is what we shall be.[137]

This general rally for economic self-sufficiency was paralleled by a call to embrace a distinctly Surinamese cultural pride. Minister of culture and celebrated poet Robin "Dobru" Ravales was at the forefront of these efforts, indefatigably promoting distinctly Surinamese languages, religions, and other creative forms. Under his efforts, the country's cultural diversity began to be celebrated and politically recognized as never before.[138] Thus, in cultural matters as with international policy, the political bottom line was clear—Surinamers have to be (and have to support) themselves. In 1983, within this general climate of politically driven cultural pride and empowerment, the artist, performer, and cultural advocate André Mosis founded the social-cultural association, Kifoko.[139]

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[136] Although the Dutch had been cutting back on their aid as an expression of their disapproval with the military coup, the decision to withdraw funding completely was made in response to the December killings, mentioned in Chapter 1, in which 15 prominent public personalities were rounded up, tortured, and then executed in what appears to be Bouterse's effort to silence his opposition.

[137] From *De Ware Tijd,* Dec. 27, 1982. Quoted in Dew 1994, 85.

[138] Personal Communication, Cyril Eersteling, 10/10/09.

[139] The combination of a military/revolutionary government and a strong interest in national (and particularly indigenous) culture has proven ideal conditions for the germination of cultural troupes in many other countries. For a particularly striking parallel, see Heidi Carolyn Feldman's discussion of the founding of Peru's 'Conjunto Nacional de Folklore,' under the guidance of Victoria Santa Cruz (Feldman 2006, 76).

As one of the longest running and most well known Maroon groups of its kind,[140] Kifoko is an important part of Mosis's legacy of work in the arts. Although he moved to the Netherlands in 1990, he maintains strong ties to the group's current members, and has assiduously documented the early years of the group's existence.[141] Included on his website is a self-authored account of Kifoko's founding years. The introduction to his overview is as follows:

> On August 25, 1988, the social-cultural association "Kifoko" celebrated its fifth anniversary. The occasion was marked by a number of activities. The highlight was the presentation of a "jubilee report." From that report, Kifoko has attempted to document her own study/history as well as to inform the community about [the group's] objectives. Kifoko's governing board's attention was focused early on the elements of Maroon culture that have become threatened as they have become diluted.
>
> From the Aukanes culture we knew that, in part, the past informs the future. Truly that part contains much information concerning earlier social and cultural life. It goes under others as the "Gaansamapee," the play of the elders. Gaansamapee is a series of music genres, above all those carried out by adults and elders on special occasions. They are songs that give examples from the social lives of the Aukaners. To better understand these songs, a basic familiarity of lifestyles of the Aukaners is essential. This development encouraged Kifoko to rehearse and present the traditional Aukanes music and dance styles, and also to research the cultural aspects that are narrowly interwoven with the music. And thus the social and cultural lifestyles, traditional clothing and hairstyles became a primary focus. In order to disseminate the information among the broader public, Kifoko added on a theatrical component. Different activities and ceremonies that find a normative place in the context of traditional culture can be imitated on diverse podia.
>
> In general, the different ethnic groups of Suriname know little about the culture of other groups. The average Surinamer is therefore poorly informed about Maroon societies in the interior. Truly this ignorance leads to false preconceptions and reciprocal discrimination.
>
> I hope with [the following] summary of the history of the association Kifoko, the current members have sufficient encouragement to go forward with the study of all of the important facets of the group. Additionally, I hope that with the following I have made a contribution to cultural solidarity.[142]
>
> André Mosis

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[140] See 'Group Classification' for more information on the shared properties and flexible distinctions that can support or undermine classificatory attempts.

[141] See Appendix B for a complete English translation of his historical account of the founding of Kifoko, from his website.

[142] As posted on www.kingbotho.com, April 10, 2011. Translated to English by the author. See Appendix B.

This introduction includes several key attributes of the association Kifoko. Mosis expresses the necessity of understanding Aukanes lifestyles in making sense of their performance culture, as well as an expression of the importance accorded the performance practices of earlier generations.[143] Furthermore, readers are introduced to the *gaansamapee*, which provides the structure from which Kifoko rehearsals and performances are modeled, and also the incorporation of theatre, which continues to distinguish Kifoko's performance style from other groups. His concluding paragraphs demonstrate the social role Mosis envisions for Kifoko in relation to both Maroon and Surinamese audiences.

Although his introduction provides a clear and succinct glimpse into Kifoko's character and objectives, the body of his account reveals that the group's genesis was hardly a straightforward process. Exactly what 'Kifoko' is and its primary activities have changed considerably over time. At different times over the course of the initial seven years of 'Kifoko's' existence, the name has been attributed to a semi-private workspace, an outdoor annex to that workspace, an *aleke* band that practiced in that space, an organization that produced a line of commercial art and handicrafts, a cultural association that included music and dance as well as lectures, visual art exhibitions, and events concerning Maroon culture, a branch of Toe Wan Man, a larger group involved in a variety of social and creative pursuits, and then finally to an independent group with a focus on the performing arts.

If we choose to consider 'Kifoko' as a continuous entity, the organization took a particularly circuitous path before arriving at a form that resembles the performance group I studied in 2006-2009. An alternate interpretation is to consider 'Kifoko' as a word Mosis used frequently to describe his creative and cultural pursuits, in which case it would be fair to say that there have been several 'Kifoko's' that Mosis sprouted before a social-cultural association resembling the one I encountered

[143] Note that Mosis specifies that he is discussing Aukanes culture, instead of Maroon culture more broadly.

took root.[144] This is one of many examples of the degree to which the group's structure and activities are intermeshed with André Mosis's own initiatives as both an artist and cultural activist.

Just as Mosis's artistic and social interests had a strong impact on Kifoko's activities, the group's membership and professional associations also continue to bear the stamp of his influence. Mosis drew upon the expertise and energy of those he knew in the early years of the group, including many family members. In his overview, Mosis discusses a number of relocations over the course of the first seven years of Kifoko's existence. In addition to more formal workspaces, the relocations of Mosis's family are included, giving some indication of the importance of his family's contributions to the growth and overall success of the group. All of Mosis's five children participated in Kifoko, and have continued to perform under their father's tutelage in the Netherlands after the family moved there in 1990. Georgio Mosis, André's oldest son, is mentioned in his father's account both for having flourished and developed especial talent within Kifoko, and for his role in an administrative capacity within the organization.

Likewise, the Paramakan presence in Kifoko that was still strong during my fieldwork term is an extension of Mosis's family connections and the earliest days of the group. Among the most influential of Kifoko's early advisors was Mosis's wife Laetitia's father, Da Tipa Tojo. Mosis recounts:

> I knew my father-in-law, Da Tipa Tojo, to be an established apintiman and respected master drummer within the Paramakan community. I asked him to instruct young musicians in awasa and songe music. On August 25, 1983, I invited him to oversee a rehearsal. We invited all of the previously registered young singers, musicians, and dancers [to take part]. In turn, Da Tipa brought with him to the rehearsal another percussionist, Baa Nalibi Abani.[145] My request to Da Tipa was actually to give a workshop for these young musicians, allowing them to learn the steps and music of awasa and songe correctly.

[144] This is an instance in which I think perceptual agency proves useful as a tool for interpretation.

[145] Da Abani continued to be considered a respected affiliate and advisor to the group in 2009-2010.

Since Kifoko's founding, Paramakan musicians and dancers have exerted a continuous and often authoritative presence, despite Kifoko's primary music and dance genres being of Aukanes origin. The Tojo family has continued to number among the group's most influential members. Coupled with the leadership of Paramakan members Graciella and Maria Dewini, the prevalence of Paramakan Maroons within the group is undeniable, constituting a distinguishing difference between them and other awasa groups within Paramaribo.

Beyond family connections, Mosis constructed a far-reaching network of individuals and institutions that continued to be active influences on the group during my fieldwork. André Pakosie, whose cultural initiatives provided the initial impetus for Kifoko, continues to be a figurehead of Maroon cultural activism. Both Mosis and Pakosie relocated to the Netherlands and continue to encourage greater interest and study of Maroon culture in Suriname and its former colonial power. They share an interest in documentation as well as social interaction and research, and their various projects frequently intersect. Many other individuals mentioned in Mosis's text, including Paul Abena, Wilgo Baarn, and Henk Tjon,[146] continued to be active collaborators with the group in a variety of capacities.

After his relocation to Holland, Mosis continued to exercise a formidable presence within Kifoko. Up until 2010[147], he would return to Suriname on a regular basis. These return trips frequently involved a project of some sort that included Kifoko's participation.[148] In Mosis's

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[146] Henk Tjon died during my fieldwork in 2009, but his involvement with Kifoko continued up until the weeks before his death.

[147] Suriname's 2010 election reinstated former dictator Desi Bouterse as president. At the time of writing, the degree to which this would affect the safety of Mosis and other cultural activists who had come into conflict with the former regime was yet to be seen. He did, however, return to Suriname in early 2012, following the death of Gaanman Gazon.

[148] To give two examples, in June, 2008, Mosis collaborated with Kifoko in a lecture/discussion he had organized on the topic of Maroon religious beliefs and practices. The following year Kifoko was a featured group at Mosis's wife's 50th birthday celebration.

absence, his name and the various ideals that he had instilled in the group as the founding member were often invoked in conversations about Kifoko's main objectives, ideals, and future directions.

Names and Classifications

A traditional Maroon house consists of a single room. "Kifoko" is the name of a designated corner of the house where broken or unused things are put to be taken up later and repaired or shared with neighbors.[149] The overarching sentiment of the name as it was described to me by group artistic director Eddie Lante is that people should hold on to their culture—they should not discard their cultural heritage or forsake it in favor of other, flashy or novel forms.

Yet there are additional implications that I find difficult to ignore. Foremost among them is the implication that the things that are placed in the kifoko have undergone some variety of damage, has suffered imperfections, or have fallen into disuse. The objects that are put in the kifoko are those that need care and attention in order to be *restored* to working order.

Unlike Saisa or Fiamba, Kifoko used one term to characterize itself in the press or in formal situations—"sociaal culturel vereniging," or socio-cultural association.[150] This term could cover a wide range of activities beyond those for which the group is best known, namely music and dance, and considering the wide range of activities that contribute to the group's development, this title seems especially fitting.

Some Distinguishing Characteristics of Kifoko

Several features of Kifoko have persisted from its earliest iterations and have resulted in its distinctive character. Kifoko had the most extensive and public social network of the three groups,

[149] Kenneth Bilby notes that 'kifoko' can be used in a much more general sense, simply meaning, 'corner.'

[150] Like the other groups considered here, however, in informal circumstances, the terms and concepts members invoked varied from one social situation to the next.

with strong connections to members of the Directorate of Culture[151] and the continuing support of the Department of Culture Studies, Mosis's former employer. Likewise, the connections fostered with the (predominantly Creole) community organization NAKS have continued to grow;[152] the two groups perform alongside each other most frequently as members of Alakondre Dron, Suriname's national performing ensemble. Further affiliations have been developed and strengthened over the years, including the group's frequent engagements at Hotel Torarica, one of Suriname's most elite hotels,[153] and connections with Bergendal, Suriname's premier eco-resort. Because Kifoko is connected to these and other networks within the Surinamese political/economic apparatus and the country's growing tourism industry, the group generates a larger amount of publicity and a steadier degree of interaction with non-Maroon audiences than any other Maroon group within Suriname.[154] From these high-profile connections, Kifoko garners frequent opportunities for international travel—most often to neighboring French Guyana and Guyana, but occasionally to other locations in the Caribbean and beyond.

Theatre and Poetry

Although most Kifoko performances that I witnessed did not include pieces that were conceived of as theatre, it was a performance element that the group would prepare occasionally for special events. On those occasions, short skits and monologues were designed to compliment the theme of the gathering for which they were hired to perform, or to present some message that would resonate with a specific crowd. At an October 10 (Maroon Day) event in 2008, Kifoko

[151] Among these is Alexander Tolin, who is discussed at greater length in Fiamba's profile.

[152] Eddie Lante, the current leader of Kifoko, is also a former employee of NAKS.

[153] Eddie Lante is a former employee of Hotel Torarica, and his wife, Carmen Ajerie (also a Kifoko member), worked there in 2008-2009.

[154] The inverse is also true—Kifoko had a lower percentage of performances for predominantly Maroon audiences.

developed a skit in which the community performed "Gii Pangi," the ritual bestowal of a pangi to a young woman as she reaches maturity. The group's predisposition to include theatre in their performances has no doubt been an asset in a number of their collaborative projects, most notably with Alakondre Dron,[155] which often functions as Suriname's national music and dance troupe. Despite the irregularity with which theatre was included in their performances, it remained an important dimension of Kifoko's group identity.

Many Kifoko members showed a proclivity to theatre in their activities outside of the group as well. Minio and Herman Tojo, two of the most active members within Kifoko, frequently performed in Na Bigi Du, a theatre collective that produces a body of Suriname-themed works.

Poetry recitation is another infrequent but significant activity that has been included in Kifoko's performances. André Mosis has written and performed several poems, perhaps the best known of which is "Mi nanga mi Dron,"[156] and more recently, Kifoko member Graciella Dewini has produced her own works, including the poem, "Kiibi Mi," which is a meditation on culture using a house's kifoko as a central metaphor.[157] When the group performed at André Mosis's wife, Laetitia Tojo's 50th birthday celebration, Kifoko included in their performance a series of monologues about Maroon pride and indigenous conceptions of beauty before performing *awasa*, a dance meant to highlight gendered ideals of appearance and behavior.

Education

[155] Alakondre Dron has operated since the 1980's under the direction of the late Henk Tjon and Wilgo Baarn, both of whom are mentioned as early collaborators in Mosis's overview.

[156] Mosis wrote this poem in April, 1990. My thanks to Radio Koyeba for supplying me with a recording of Mosis performing this work.

[157] Dewini performed this piece at the culminating awasa and bandammba workshop in 2011, mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Another characteristic that sets Kifoko apart from other groups is the emphasis placed on cultural documentation, research, and education. Insofar as all three groups (Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba) perform for non-Maroon audiences and offer some explanation as to the genres presented, there is an educational component to them all, yet Kifoko's educational efforts were the most overt and diverse in character.

In addition to outreach, part of the group's goal was to educate its members about Maroon culture.[158] As demonstrated by Mosis's early recruitment of Da Tipa Tojo to show Maroon youth the "correct" way to dance *awasa* and *songe*, informed cultural practice has been one of Kifoko's main objectives from the group's formative stages. Among the greatest contributions to the group's reputation for being invested in cultural authenticity or accuracy are the research projects the group pursued in 1984 and 1985. During this period Kifoko members made a series of research trips to various Maroon communities and villages, primarily in the rainforest interior, in order to gain deeper knowledge of various performance styles as well as other artistic practices, including traditional Maroon attire and hairstyling.[159] These trips involved interview, instruction on creative art forms, and documentation. They had the dual purpose of expanding the body of information available on Maroon culture, and exposing the urban residents of Kifoko to aspects of Maroon culture they might not have previously encountered.

Although Mosis had a number of ambitions for strengthening Kifoko's connections through these various fieldtrips and research efforts, there has not been any organized attempt at research on the scale of Mosis's former projects since his departure for Holland in 1990. The closest

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[158] In some ways, their research efforts underscore an approach to cultural practice that is alluded to in the name Kifoko' itself. Namely, that whatever knowledge one has, it will always be partial, and can always be added to and improved upon.

[159] Visits were not limited to Eastern Suriname, where *awasa* and *songe* originated, but to Maroon settlements in other districts as well.

approximation during the course of my fieldwork involved a renewed interest in the storytelling genre, *mato*, propelled by group leader Eddie Lante.

The word *mato* can indicate a number of different performances and modes of interaction that have in common the presence of a puzzle, description, or narrative. The *mato* that Kifoko performed as part of their general repertoire was heavily associated with funerary rites. It consisted of a series of dances, set to a rhythm that is designated as *mato*, all of which depicted or otherwise referenced a particular scene or incident.[160] On occasion, the group would hold a *mato neti*—a *mato* night—during which these songs were interwoven with *Anansi toli* (Anansi stories)[161] and various other folktales. To give a broad description of the proceedings, a storyteller will introduce a story, only to be interrupted by other people present. The person who interrupted the storyteller will then insert a different story and/or song into the main narrative as a tangent, concluding by telling the initial storyteller that he or she can resume. It is expected that the main storyteller will be interrupted at many points during the course of the telling. Even, a successful performance depends on it. The performance that results can seem frenzied, with a rapid succession of people interjecting with different narrative kernels. At times, the coherence of the overall narrative becomes tenuous. As such, these events are extremely dynamic, an ideal platform for individuals' comedic talents.[162]

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[160] To give two examples of the lyrical content of the *mato singi*'s (*mato* songs) in Kifoko's repertoire.
Lead: A mongo'ede a mongo'ede (at Mongo'ede [a place in the interior], at Mongo'ede); Koor (Chorus): N'anda a kwata e book' udu ana (That's where the monkies are breaking the branches (in the treetops).
Another song goes as follows:
Lead: Baa diya á lon, á lon. (Brother animal, don't run, don't run.) Koor: Mi n'a goni fu sutu i baa. (I don't have a gun to shoot you, brother.)
In the first song, the dancers add a pointing move to the basic mato dance step; in the second, they position their arms as though they were holding a gun.

[161] The stories of this trickster spider, attributed to the Ashanti, have been maintained and added to among many populations in the African Diaspora. Herskovits and Herskovits include many of the Anansi stories they encountered in Suriname in in *Suriname Folk-Lore* (1936). Jamaican tellings of Anansi stories have received considerable attention. (See especially: Beckwith 1969.)

[162] For more information on mato, see "Track notes" to Bilby 2010, and Price and Price 1999, 268-275.

Kifoko devoted an increasing amount of attention to the genre throughout 2009, and due to the format of these performances, increased interaction with knowledgeable outsiders was possible. Such projects fell considerably short, however, of the scope of Kifoko's early research efforts. Nonetheless, knowledge of traditional clothing, hairstyles, and other subjects that were researched on group trips is still, to some degree, incorporated into performances. Despite the lack of recent projects that the group had done, research has remained a point of distinction and pride for many members.[163]

Changes

In its formative years, Kifoko installed various committees to address specific issues related to Maroon culture, or to help the association run more smoothly. The four committees (Motivation, Verification, Documentation, and Information)[164] were headed by senior members of the group. These specialized teams have since dissolved.

**Table 3:** Kifoko's Committees, as Proposed by André Mosis

| Committee | Purpose |
|---|---|
| Motivation | Mediates conversations and differences within Kifoko that arise due to conflicting models of authority or understandings of correct behavior as a result of coexisting Maroon and urban/cosmopolitan social conventions. |
| Verification | "Controlled the revenues and expenditures of the association." |
| Information | Prepared educational meetings, was responsible for correspondence with important individuals and organizations identified as "stakeholders" in Kifoko, keeping them informed of the group's recent activities. |
| Documentation/Records | Maintaining a group archive, as well as collecting informational materials about Maroon culture. |

[163] In an interview with Maria Dewini, she told me that part of the reason why the current group did not embark on such initiatives is that, when they have free time, they would rather go to Cola Creek—a popular freshwater beach not far from the Paramaribo city limits. Meaning, if young people have free time, they would rather seek social activities, relaxation, or entertainment, as opposed to undertake this kind of educational project. (Interview, March 26, 2009.)

[164] As documented in Mosis' history (Appendix B), these two committees were joined following some arguments as to the functions of these two groups.

In terms of documentation, there is no public or communal body of records of the group's past actions. Despite Mosis's ambitions,[165] no public or semi-public Maroon culture archive has been established and maintained. Rather, members have developed personal collections of photographs, news clippings, and home videos that they present with pride, however are understandably reluctant to circulate, given the frequency with which such precious materials are damaged or lost. While the activities and infrastructure put in place to foster cultural education initiatives have eroded since the group's early years, these features that were built into Kifoko's founding still have a strong impact on the group's image.[166]

Membership

There were two official leading figures in Kifoko during the period of my fieldwork (2006-2009)—Maria Dewini was the president and Eddie Lante was considered the leader and artistic director of the group. Both were accorded comparable status and authority, however they occupied their respective leadership roles quite differently. When both were present at rehearsals, Eddie tended to take the lead, determining what activities or performance genres would receive attention at that particular rehearsal. Eddie would take attendance, keep track of potential performance opportunities, and would often interject during rehearsal with lessons pertaining to what was being performed or life in more general terms. In keeping with André Mosis's practice, Eddie kept a daybook in which he recorded attendance, managed performance engagements, and notes related to the group.

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[165] Mosis's call to expand the body of existing literature on Maroon culture and to make that information accessible to the public are clearly stated in his overview. (See Appendix B.)

[166] Kifoko and Fiamba both self-identified using the word 'vereniging' (in English, organization). Perhaps not coincidentally, these two groups devoted the greatest amount of energy into group infrastructure, creating formal officers, bylaws, and stated objectives.

Maria, on the other hand, took a particularly active role in teaching junior dancers. She frequently clarified ambiguities in choreography or on technical matters concerning a given dance. Although she handled less of the business aspects of Kifoko, she was generally the contact person for individuals interested in joining the group. Often, she would determine when it was time to begin warming up and who would do it. When Eddie was not at a rehearsal, Maria would oversee the group's activities.

Other members took on various administrative responsibilities, for instance acting as secretary or treasurer, but during a rehearsal, they tended not to receive any additional attention or authority. Several other members, including Henni Tojo and Irma Dabenta were respected for their knowledge and skill in the various performance genres and were often consulted on performance issues during rehearsals, but they operated without any formal title or additional responsibilities.

Additional, informal opportunities to demonstrate leadership were open to any group member. New ideas were regularly solicited on topics ranging from how better to run rehearsals and solve logistical problems, to developing new choreography to add to Kifoko's existing routines. By taking an active role in such situations, newer members could demonstrate their commitment to the group, or potentially their desire to deepen their involvement.

A New Generation of Leaders

In 2008-2009, with Kifoko's veteran performers getting older, a younger generation of performers was beginning to emerge. Kifoko had the largest membership of performers over the age of 30.[167] Their generational breadth gave them a distinctive character, both in their presentation

[167] Kifoko was the only group that had open discussions about how employers and audiences had a general preference for younger dancers. Performers from all the groups acknowledged that audiences are especially likely to applaud for particularly young dancers who already demonstrate considerable talent, however, for groups with a smaller age range, age preferences may not arisen in discussions with potential employers as frequently.

style and the character of their rehearsals. Because of this, coupled with the longevity of the group as a whole, members who would be considered senior in either Saisa or Fiamba were more likely to be considered the generation to come in Kifoko. Individuals with particular talent and enthusiasm for the group were encouraged to exercise their creative vision in terms of warm-ups, new songs, and choreographies. Of these younger members, four stood out for their multiple initiatives and leadership roles within the group. They were: Herman Tojo, Minio Tojo, John Binta, and Graciella Dewini. All four members are from families that have been active in Kifoko since its earliest years.

Herman Tojo, Minio Tojo, John Binta

During the period of my research with Kifoko, Herman, Minio, and John were three young men whose contributions to the group are difficult to overstate. Consisting of two brothers and a cousin, this trio was involved (crucially so, in most instances) in nearly every aspect of the group. They were a vital force in terms of drumming, making up half of the group's percussion personnel. In addition, they were three out of four of the men who regularly danced,[168] and although they sang less often, all three were confident and competent in that capacity as well. Herman, John, and Minio each had distinctive personalities as performers and individuals, but due to their family ties, the ease and frequency with which they worked together, and the ways in which they assumed the same roles and responsibilities within the group, at times they seemed to comprise their own unit—a team within the larger 'team' of Kifoko. Sometimes through Kifoko and at other times on their own, these three young men undertook various projects and collaborations as a trio of drummer/dancers. During 2008-2009, such collaborations included a series of dance experiments with street dance

[168] Out of all of the male members of the group, the two who danced most frequently in performance were Liento Day and John Binta.

group Mystikal and providing the percussion for the dance portion of the Sa Dumma ("Can-Do Woman") Talent Contest.[169]

Of the three young men in Kifoko, Minio seemed most interested in taking a leadership role in directing rehearsal activities. Eddie and Maria were the two undisputed authorities, however Minio often took on the role of instructor in their stead. His leadership style differed significantly from Eddie's; his own ideas about performance aesthetics (and, I would argue, ideas about professionalism) often gave rehearsals under his direction a more rigorous feel. When the group was at rest in its configuration of lines, waiting for the lead singer and drummers to initiate the next song, Minio directed all members to stand silently with their hands at their sides, facing the wall of mirrors at the front of the rehearsal space. Standing at attention in this fashion is not a part of common practice with any of the genres that Kifoko performed, but rather one of many adaptations to a different mode of presentation. While this practice was met with some degree of frustration[170] from fellow Kifoko members who tired of the reminders to correct their posture or to stop fidgeting, these moments of stillness provided a clear contrast between points of rest and dance itself, giving the impression of a coordinated and disciplined group.



[169] The relative autonomy and mobility of male performers is the result of a number of factors, both emanating from Maroon performance and social practice and further magnified by the economic and logistical interests of hiring individuals and organizations. As discussed in S. Price (1993) and elsewhere, the increased mobility of male members of Maroon societies is a characteristic of the traditional gendered divisions in labor. Within a performance sphere, men are able to assume any role within a performance ensemble—whether as a singer, drummer, or dancer—whereas women are not encouraged to drum. As a result, patrons with limited funds will sooner hire a male performer who can function in all capacities, as opposed to a female, who cannot perform as a drummer. The combination of these circumstances results in women's contributions consistently receiving less exposure, with hardly any opportunities for enterprising women to circulate independently of a group, as these three young men have managed to do. This situation echoes the hiring practices of academic institutions in the US and Europe, in which the gender disparity of hired performers and instructors from Africa and the African Diaspora is glaring.

[170] I interpreted this as their reaction after witnessing, over successive rehearsals, eye rolls and heavy sighs in response to his instructions. However, I did not obtain verbal confirmation from the group members in question.

Graciella Dewini was another individual whose personality loomed large within the group. I first met Graciella when I went to the first rehearsal of my extended fieldwork term in 2008. I hadn't seen her at rehearsals the previous summer. She was there with her son Dikembe, who was a toddler at the time, dividing her time between coaching a small group of girls who were new to the group and encouraging young Dikembe, who was standing at his mother's side, stamping his feet in imitation of the dancers. Graciella, herself a talented dancer, often acted as a coach to less experienced dancers, her status as a relatively young senior member facilitated a different kind of relationship with newer (and inevitably younger) dancers.[171]

A year later, when she was pregnant with her second child, the degree of Graciella's commitment to the group and involvement became clear. When she became too large to participate in rehearsals, she continued to attend and take notes from the sidelines. When she rejoined the group after the birth of her second child, she did so with a list of comments and suggestions concerning ways to use rehearsal time more effectively and how to diversify and reinvigorate Kifoko's performances. Of all the members in Kifoko active from 2008-2009, Graciella demonstrated a perpetual interest in reformatting rehearsals in order to make them more effective and to foster the development of the younger members, particularly the dancers.

Members At-Large

While some members have dedicated considerable time and attention to Kifoko for years, there are differing levels of commitment among newer members, and a variety of reasons that compel them to join. Not all members will continue to participate in the group for an extended time, yet their contributions to the group and their role in fulfilling aspects of Kifoko's mission are vital to the organization, even if their time within the group is relatively short.

[171] 'Julia', discussed later in this chapter, was in a similar social position.

During 2008-2009, several young women from a local dance troupe, sponsored by Parbo Beer, began attending rehearsals. These young women expressed interest in connecting with their heritage,[172] but they also shared an affinity for dance and enjoyed each other's company.[173] Ivanka and Simani Ritveld, two young girls who joined in the winter of 2008, became involved in the group with the hopes that they could participate more fully in a dance group at their (Maroon) Evangelical church as a result.[174]

As important as it is to discuss individual leaders, one of the most distinctive facets of Kifoko was the atmosphere that, to me, seemed dominated by the older women of the group. Most of these women commanded the authority of an elder and a veteran performer, yet they took on no official responsibilities. The ease that came with the many years of their acquaintance, at times predating their involvement in the group, pervaded the rehearsal atmosphere. The physical humor and playful banter that came out as members interacted in performance, whether in rehearsal or at a gig, was an amplification of the camaraderie that existed in their casual and everyday interaction. Seniority within Kifoko was a composite of a variety of factors, including age, knowledge and expertise in the performance forms in Kifoko's repertoire, the length of time a member had been involved with the group, and his or her talents as a performer. These criteria overlapped to a large degree, making it impossible to determine what I call 'senior standing' by any single attribute.

## A Typical Kifoko Rehearsal

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[172] All but one of these young women were of Maroon parentage.

[173] When these same girls began incorporating *awasa* moves into their dance routines as members of the 'Parbo Girls,' some members of Kifoko were taken aback, and questioned whether these members were invested in the group itself, or 'using' the group to gain the skills and knowledge to enhance their routines in the Parbo group. This tension never manifested itself in an outright confrontation.

[174] The Ritveld sisters attended the R.K. Bansgemeente Church on Indira Gandhiweg, on the outskirts of town. The Church featured a gospel performance group that performed awasa and aleke, with song lyrics related to their worship practices.

Paramaribo is a sprawling city, and getting to rehearsals—or meetings of any kind—often involved a great deal of time and patience. For members living on the outskirts of the city, particularly those who depended on the public bus system, getting to and from rehearsals involved lengthy commutes. Even from my rather centrally located apartment, it took me roughly 40 minutes to travel by bus to the center of town and walk to the rehearsal space.

Walking east from the bus depot to CCS, the frenetic street traffic begins to dissipate, the crowded commercial area transitions to the the wooden slatted Dutch colonial architecture and sleepy tree-lined streets of the historic area, featured on most all the tourist postcards of the city. Like most of the buildings in the historic part of downtown Paramaribo, CCS (the Center for Surinamese Culture) is painted white with dark colored trim. This large complex houses a modest auditorium, a library, some administrative spaces, as well as the dance studio that Kifoko rented for its twice-weekly rehearsals.[175] The dance studio is hidden from view of the main entrance, located further from the main street and adjacent to the two classroom structures of the Effendi Ketwartu Music School. The sounds of a jazz combo or saxophone lesson would often mingle with the singing and percussion of a Kifoko rehearsal. Often, parents, friends, interested onlookers, or people who had rented studio or rehearsal space later that evening would congregate on the lawn in front of the building, talking or watching a rehearsal from the doorway. Although rehearsals often had a private feel to them, their location in CCS made them more easily accessible and exposed to the public. Visitors, both formal and informal, were common.

The CCS dance studio was a spacious room with ballet barres bolted to three of the walls. The fourth wall held a panel of mirrors, and rehearsals were conducted facing the mirrors as members would face an audience. The floor was made of well-sanded hardwood planks, which provided a luxuriant dancing surface when kept in good repair (which was not always the case), and

[175] During my follow-up visit in 2011, some Kifoko rehearsals were held in the CCS auditorium.

produced a satisfying 'boom' when dancers stomped heavily during their more strenuous dancing. As the rehearsal space was used for a variety of different purposes throughout the week, members who arrived early would set to work sweeping the dirt tracked in by others' shoes or litter.

**Figure 6**. Kifoko's rehearsal space, the ballet studio at CCS.

Kifoko members tended to trickle in over the course of a half hour or more before the rehearsal would get underway. Members generally began arriving at around 4:15 PM. Sunday rehearsals were supposed to begin at 4PM, while weekday rehearsals had an official start time of 4:30. Regardless of the official start time, rehearsal would begin whenever there was a quorum of experienced performers, or when an experienced member initiated warm-ups. This tended to be significantly later than the planned start time, and members' tardiness was a recurring topic of conversation and complaint. I arrived at some rehearsals at 4:45 and was chastised for being late, while there were others where I was among the first to show up. Although the room was officially rented for two hours on each day, most days Kifoko was the last group to use the space, and could therefore extend the rehearsal to as late as 7:30.

The time between when members began arriving and when a rehearsal would start was a time for socializing. People would wait for the rehearsal to begin on the stoop in front of the

doorway of the building, or along the heavy wooden benches that lined the rehearsal space. Here they would eat a snack, recount the latest gossip about recent events and mutual acquaintances, show each other goods they had recently acquired in town, braid each others' hair, or take some quiet time before the rehearsal got going. Women often took particular pleasure in showing off new clothing, the traditional wrap skirts, *pangis*, most of all. Those who were adept at the intricate cross-stitch designs for which the Eastern Maroons are known would often bring in works in progress, but at other times people would bring in purchased *pangis* as well. These informal interactions and activities were crucial in forming and maintaining social bonds between members. While delayed starting times due to excessive lateness was a source of annoyance, the chance to chat and enjoy each other's company was a valued part of every rehearsal.

Those members who had children often brought them to rehearsal. Some youngsters would watch more or less patiently from the sidelines, while others did their best to join in the rehearsals, starting from as young as three years of age. Sincere efforts to participate were encouraged by adult members, and youngsters were generally treated with considerable patience and affection.

The gender imbalance of Kifoko's membership played a large role in how rehearsals were structured. Most of the genres Kifoko performs require a minimum of three drummers. With roughly five men among the group's regular members, and drumming being a predominantly male activity, the male members of the group had fewer opportunities to dance—they were needed to cover the drum parts. When there were fewer than three men in attendance at a given rehearsal, the focus for that meeting shifted to dimensions of performance that could be rehearsed effectively without the drums. Members might instead rehearse songs, focus on strengthening junior members' skills in the fundamental steps and postures of a dance style, or occasionally these rehearsals would be used to teach the women various drum patterns.

The Rehearsal Proper

After performing a series of warm-ups,[176] rehearsals typically followed a set progression of genres. The basis of this progression is the order of genres in a *gaansamapee*, a large performance event, often initiated as part of a funerary rite (for instance a *broko dei*) or other special occasion. This order—*mato, susa, songe, awasa, umandagwe*—also formed the basis of Kifoko rehearsals and performances. In many rehearsals, time did not allow for members to practice all of the genres. When this was the case, the progression would be maintained in that *umandagwe*, for instance, would never be rehearsed before *mato* or *susa*. *"Kikri"* (or, Kifoko creations), *loonsei* (an early predecessor of *aleke*), and various theatrical interludes were more flexible and were often rehearsed at the beginning or the end of a meeting.

Female dancers organized themselves into one or two horizontal rows facing the mirrors, depending how many people were in attendance. The front row was for the more experienced dancers, while junior members would occupy the second row. Within each line, those who were stationed at either end had the additional responsibility of making sure that dancers advanced and receded from the performance space in a straight line. The dancer farthest to the left cued synchronized dance movements, the others listening closely for the sound of her *kawai* as she changed from one pattern to the next. Drummers were positioned either directly in back of the dancers, or to the dancers' right. When there were adequate numbers of men to cover both drumming and dancing, the male dancers often danced in back of the rows of female dancers, at times integrating into their choreography, while at other times dancing and trying out new moves from their position at the back of the room.[177] The lead singer(s) would either stand in back of the

[176] Typically, if John or Minio were present, one of them would lead warm-ups. Eddie led these rehearsals less often, and occasionally, when neither John or Minio was present, Maria would instruct me to lead warm-ups.

[177] Kifoko's performance of *susa* is a notable exception in that it features two male dancers performing opposite one another, flanked by rows of women who would cheer and dance to encourage the solo dancers in between

dancers or to one side. All members were expected to help supply the chorus to the songs, however the few singers who took the lead part would dance the *boli wataa* step, a kind of resting pattern, as they sang. It was common for a singer to be joined by as many as four other members in the back or to the side of the dancers. These women would maintain a strong '*koor*,' or chorus,[178] and *boli wataa*, while the rest of the members would dance more vigorously.

Finding a Place in Rehearsal

Julia's voice rose above the casual conversations and the rustle of *kawai* ankle rattles as dancers took their places in rehearsal, her voice strained with emotion.[179] She had just been instructed by an older dancer to leave the position she had taken as a *koor* singer and to join the line of dancers that was forming, in preparation for the rehearsal proper to begin. Senior members often opted to position themselves as had Julia and sing *koor* when they were not inclined to dance. She was tired, she protested, and had had a long day at work. Further, she wasn't feeling well, and objected to group members asking personal questions as to the nature of her sickness. If she couldn't take her place among the supporting singers, then she would go. Clearly upset, she picked up her belongings from the side benches of the rehearsal place and left. This was an unusual occurrence. It was the first time I had ever heard Julia voice open opposition in rehearsal; her response marked a clear contrast to her habitually cheerful and cooperative disposition. A moment of astonished silence followed in her wake before people turned their focus back to readying themselves for rehearsal.

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confrontations. While their presentation is stylized, it bears many similarities to the social and spatial organization of performers in space. See Appendix (C) for more information about *susa.*

[178] 'Koor' is a word borrowed from the Dutch. For a discussion of the term and the potential implications of its introduction into the performance lexicon, see Chapter 6.

[179] Based on fieldnotes from a rehearsal on January 12, 2009. Julia is a pseudonym.

At 30, Julia was one of few dancers who fell in between the older and younger age brackets of the group. She was a touring member, and in recent rehearsals senior members had been encouraging her to take the lead role in singing. Yet she was still a junior member in the sense that, frequently, she received direction from other members of Kifoko, and her ready compliance was expected. That her Mai and Pai—the mother and father of the man with whom she was in a romantic relationship—were both senior members in the group cemented her belonging to a younger generational category.

Through her objections, Julia called attention to the ways that authority was communicated through members' use of space, though most of these guidelines were never stated explicitly. The group's social hierarchy was most noticeable among Kifoko's female membership, which was larger in number and demonstrated a greater range in age and ability. Seeing as there were often three or fewer male members present at a rehearsal, it was expected that the male members would act as drummers.[180]

To stand alongside the primary singer and sing *koor*, as Julia had done, was generally an acceptable option only for women in their 30's or older, who were already touring members. As a matter of course, if a dancer had yet to reach an advanced level, or had not achieved senior status by virtue of her age, full participation as a dancer was expected at all times during a rehearsal.[181] During

[180] If there were more than three male members, the additional members would often stand at the back of the room as well, singing koor, spelling fellow drummers when they were tired, and occasionally advancing to the center of the performance space to dance soloistically, either by themselves or in pairs.

[181] My initial experiences with the group were an exception to this general rule. When I first started attending rehearsals in 2006, my initial participation consisted of standing at the back of the room with the singers and practicing the *boli wataa* resting step, while listening to the *koor*—the chorus—and trying to sing along. After our working relationship was established, I was then expected to join in the dancing and submit to instruction, as with the regular members.

**Table 4:** Layout of Kifoko's Rehearsal Space (CCS Ballet Studio)

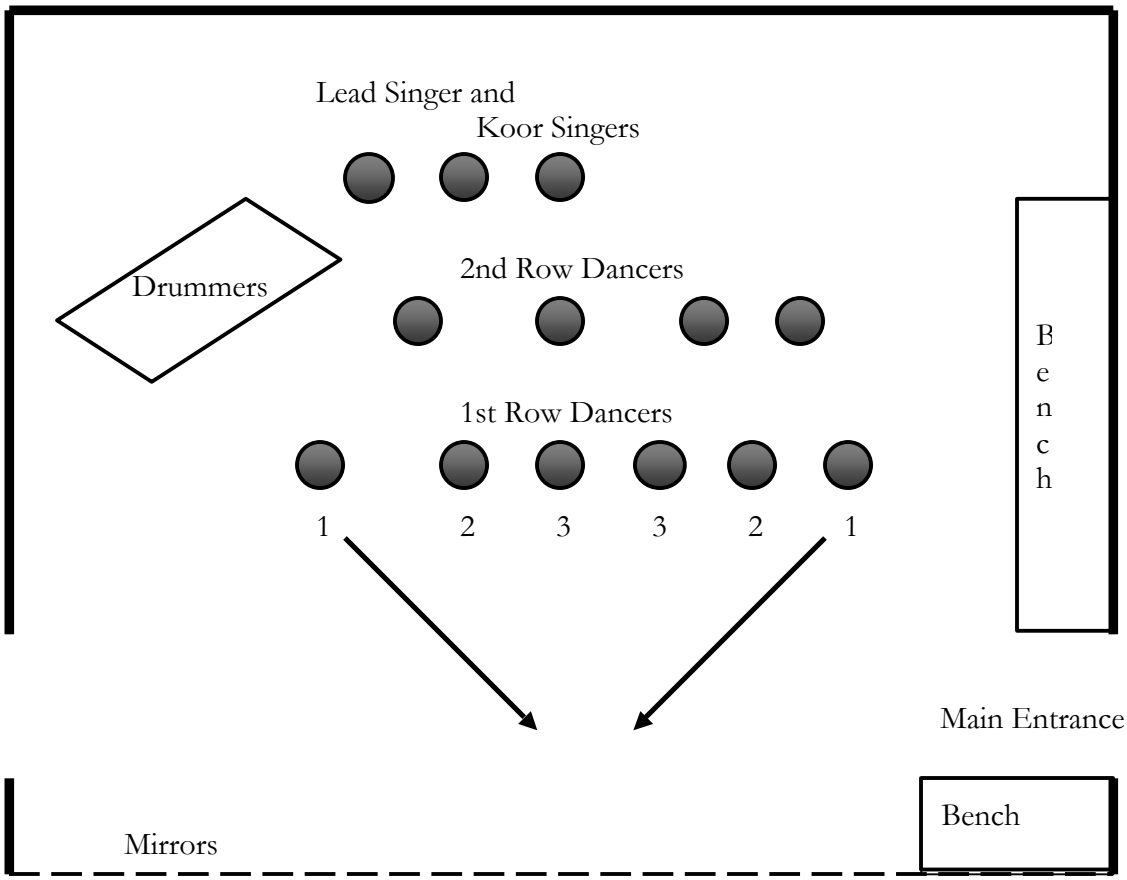


*Figure (#): Kifoko's standard rehearsal formation. Numbers in the first row reference the order in which dancers will approach and recede from the main performance area.*

those rehearsals in which the focus was directed at younger members, senior members could either participate alongside the junior members, act as coaches or instructors, or observe from the sidelines.[182]

In warm ups, too, seniority played a role, with senior members frequently opting out of some or all of the warm-up activities. While members who arrived late were, at times, expected to run laps before joining the rehearsal that was underway, senior members often forewent this step and joined in the rehearsal directly without drawing comment or criticism.

[182] This was not necessarily a passive activity, often, dancers sitting on the sidelines would critique the movements of a junior member, especially when the group was trying to figure out why it was the dancing did not look right.

The practice of participation as an experienced dancer in the front line differed significantly from that of the more junior dancers who occupied the second line. Members of this back line did not always get as many chances to dance soloistically, but were expected to take notice of the movement styles of first line dancers and manage the more basic tasks of performing the resting *boli wataa* step, swaying in synchrony with the dancers to either side of her. After the first line of performers had danced, the second line usually advanced to the front and followed the same sequence that they had just watched, often with breaks in which senior members critiqued their dancing and offered pointers. It often happened that dancers would change places or their order in the line would be altered, so dancers who wished to dance together, or who matched each other in terms of expertise would meet in the center to dance.

For most of the duration of my fieldwork, my rehearsal time with Kifoko was spent wavering between the first and second line of dancers, awaiting instruction from one of the older women as to where I should position myself. At times I was expected to instruct younger dancers, while on other occasions I danced alongside them. For those of us whose status was ambiguous, these bi-weekly rearrangements entailed the gratification of skill or knowledge affirmed in one rehearsal, the disappointment of an assessment that fell short of our own hopeful estimations of our abilities at others. A dancer's feelings about being paired with a particular dancer in this soloistic section, or whether or not she was inclined to communicate with the other individual (or individuals), was communicated through her face and body language.

Through the spatial expression of these social and artistic hierarchies, Kifoko members can formulate impressions of what their contributions to the collective are. Social mobility in Kifoko—for women, anyway—starts in the second line of dancers and ends with the ability to self-designate the degree and character of one's participation. The changing patterns of circulation within the rehearsal space can indicate a dancer's progress and achievement over time.

Kifoko rehearsals often differed dramatically from what would transpire in a Kifoko performance. In part due to the size of the group and in part in an effort to create the most impressive show, Kifoko performances generally involved only a hand-selected collection of the group's strongest and most senior performers,[183] whereas the rehearsals were a space in which everyone was encouraged to participate. Indeed, if anything, those with the least experience were expected to make an even greater (or perhaps more consistent) effort. Choreography that was implemented in performance was presented and developed during some rehearsals, but in other instances, the performance routine for a given dance genre was significantly different from the way it was practiced in rehearsal. A further consequence of this duality was that, when a junior member began performing with the group, that person might occasionally need training outside the standard rehearsal training in order to properly prepare.

I see this duality as a crucial point—although rehearsals were a chance for dancers of all abilities to hone their performance skills, the final preparations necessary to join the core group of performing members was generally undertaken in private, away from a rehearsal setting. Rehearsals, then, operated at a strategic distance from the objectives of preparation for specific performances. In this way, also, senior members of the group could safeguard accessibility to certain kinds of information. Saisa and Fiamba did not share this feature with Kifoko; they maintained more continuity between rehearsal and performance practice.[184]

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[183] A few other factors were weighed in deciding who would attend a specific performance. Of course, member availability was a concern. In addition, the character of the performance and the occasional special requests of employers for a specific subset of the group to be well represented (for instance younger members, or a higher concentration of male or female performers).

[184] One possible reason why Kifoko would be more judicious in the regulation of information within the group is that it was the most publicly accessible. While many group members belonged to the same family networks, newcomers were often relatively unknown to the group's longstanding members. By providing limited access to certain information, members could choose to disclose information only after a person's good intentions and trustworthiness was established. In contrast to Herzfeld's research among Cretan artisans (Herzfeld 2004), in which being able to "steal

Singing Rehearsals

Singing practices were a time for members to double-check the words to songs, as well as to work on tone and a cohesive group sound. The Kifoko song repertoire was vast, and added to the songs that were performed frequently during rehearsal, many senior members of the group had their own personal repertoires.[185] Occasionally a new song would be introduced, but more often the focus was on songs that were already part of Kifoko's repertoire. In general, members sang more established songs than they did new compositions, but there were certainly exceptions to this rule.[186] Even with songs that were frequently performed, it became clear from time to time that people did not always know what the words and/or the meanings of these songs were. By devoting time specifically to singing, misunderstandings could often be identified and corrected.

As with the other groups, all members of Kifoko were expected to sing the chorus, or *koor*.[187] Singing rehearsals provided an additional opportunity for those members who sang lead, and specifically for members who tended not to sing the lead part in rehearsals but showed potential for doing so (or doing so more often) in the future. Singing rehearsals afforded such individuals a chance to practice and improve in a constructive environment. Just as the drumming personnel at a given rehearsal influenced the events of that rehearsal, a scarcity or abundance of experienced singers could also play a role in what was rehearsed.

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information with the eyes" was socially valued, stealth was not lauded amoung Kifoko, nor the other dance groups within the city. To the contrary, such behavior was seen as deeply disrespectful.

[185] See Henni's song, *Bai wan keti,* in Chapter 6.

[186] These include 'Sranan Kondee,' a song that Kifoko was commissioned to create as part of a government initiative to get Maroons to vote in Surinamese national elections. John Binta created an aleke-inspired awasa song about a washing machine, with the intention of using it as the basis for new choreography. While the group experimented with this over several rehearsals, the choreography never solidified, and the song received no further attention.

[187] This is different from how André Pakosie described 'traditional' performance practice, in which only those who were known to have a good singing voice would sing *koor*. Pakosie noted the negative side to the more inclusive approach adopted by groups, indicating that the overall quality of the singing tended to decline as a result. See Chapter 6.

One facet of these song rehearsals that I found particularly interesting was that they were most often led by Maria who was, by her own admission, not a singer. Nonetheless, she would lead the vocal exercises that began this section of rehearsal and direct the course of activities throughout this portion of activities. When one of the designated lead singers was absent, or in order to give them a break after singing several successive songs, Maria would lead some songs herself. She often coached members on voice-related issues, such as projecting and singing from the diaphragm, or improving one's tone.

Just as when Kifoko would rehearse with drumming, dancing, and singing combined, singing rehearsals tended to progress through the genres of the *gaansamapee*, beginning first with *mato*, and ending with *awasa* or *umandagwe*. There tended to be a wider range of tempi in singing rehearsals than during rehearsals in which singing occurred alongside drumming and dance. The tendency in the former case was to begin with several slow numbers in free meter or with a languid pulse and gradually increase the tempo to the point that it would be more danceable.[188]

Teaching Drumming

Kifoko was the only one of the three groups that would, on occasion, take time in rehearsal to provide drumming instruction for women or others with limited drumming experience. This was not a frequent practice—such instruction might take place monthly or bi-monthly. Women who proved to have some basic competence would be asked, on occasions when few drummers were in attendance, to play *tun* for a rehearsal, providing the steady beat that grounds the dancers and the other two drummers. Eddie would direct the drumming during these exercises, designating the pattern each drum was to play. The patterns taught were often simplified versions of what the Kifoko drummers would play during rehearsal. Those who knew more advanced patterns or ways

[188] I found most performances of *awasa* maintained a pulse of approximately mm 130-155.

of embellishing the basis as Lante taught it were free to embellish, so long as it was in time and consonant with the style of drumming. The patterns for *aleke*, *songe*, *mato*, and *loonsei* were introduced in rehearsals I attended during the period of fieldwork. At times, Eddie would use words or phrases that had an onomatopoetic relationship to the pattern in order to help novice drummers get the correct timing and inflection, however the meaning of these phrases and possible correlations between words and the performance context were seldom discussed.

These drumming lessons had a somewhat lighthearted feel to them. The experienced dancers in the group were also very experienced listeners, and many of the women would confront the discrepancy between how a pattern was supposed to sound and what they played with an attitude of play and humor. While Eddie or one of the other drummers was busy elsewhere, women would offer their own critiques on tempo or whether a drum pattern was correctly executed, informally instructing one another and experimenting with various patterns they had heard.[189]

Wrap-up

Frequently, routines ended with the members gathering in a circle to discuss group business, be it an evaluation of a recent performance, discussion of an upcoming event, or some other social or organizational issue that involved the group. Less often, these discussions happened at the outset of a rehearsal. In most instances, Eddie would direct the conversation. When a senior member of the group celebrated a birthday or another significant life event, she might bring food or refreshment to share with the group, which would be parsed out among members during this concluding portion of rehearsal as well.

Departure

[189] Although women were provisional participants in drum playing during rehearsal, I did not witness any woman from Kifoko playing percussion in public performance.

Rehearsal concluded around dusk, usually after 7PM. Members would emerge from the rehearsal space, chatting with friends as the sun set. After a strenuous workout, steam would escape people's heads as they walked out into the cool evening air. Those who came in cars would wait as family members and neighbors piled in. If there was a performance coming up, Eddie would announce which members were expected to attend and discuss logistics. Friends and family members left in clusters, walking home or to the nearest bus station. Occasionally, a group of young people left rehearsal together to hang out somewhere in the city before returning home. For myself and the other members who took the bus back home after rehearsal, Sunday evenings involved a long wait on one of the few evening busses still running. Most bus lines would wait for the bus to be completely full before leaving the depot, and the exceptionally quiet Sunday evenings led to long waits, occasionally exceeding 45 minutes, before a bus would roll out of the depot. On Thursday nights I would pack up quickly and dash off to my second rehearsal of the evening, joining the members of Saisa for their weekly rehearsal. Sitting in a PL bus heading out of town, I would try to scribble down notes from Kifoko's rehearsal in the half-light, or try to collect my thoughts as the bus headed out of the city, preparing myself for the second stage of my busy evening.

## ARTICULATING MEANING IN GROUP PRACTICE

Up to this point, I have introduced many ways in which Kifoko members circulate within the rehearsal space itself, and the various performance and leadership roles that they can inhabit. I have outlined the history of the group's founding, suggesting that many of Kifoko's distinguishing characteristics bear some relationship to the group's formative years and the strong ideological visions of the group's founder, André Mosis. Tradition is accessed through the musical and choreographic content of rehearsal, as well as through the progression of genres that serves as a

structural framework, based on the *gaansamapee*. Through intimate, one-on-one dance instruction and the collective critiques of senior members, less experienced performers benefit from others' contextual and embodied knowledge of these cultural forms. Making the time to attend the group's twice-weekly rehearsals demonstrates a commitment to Maroon performance art, whether motivated by aesthetic enjoyment, a culturally-driven motivation to "sabi i gaansama sani" (to know the traditions of older generations), or a combination thereof.

But the tradition- and community-based dimensions of group rehearsal and performance are woven in with other strands of signification. Like the other groups in this study, Kifoko was fundamentally engaged in the ideological discourses of cosmopolitanism, professionalism, and Surinamese nationalism. What distinguished Kifoko from Saisa and Fiamba is the amount of time group members spent reflecting on their collective image and their social situation as urban Maroons, engaging in the process of fashioning and determining their relationship to their various audiences and employers.

Most often, reflexive commentary and conversation arose in formal group discussion before rehearsal started, or as it was wrapping up, although some such comments arose during the course of group instruction. Additional opinions and observations were peppered into informal discussion outside of rehearsal, especially as members traveled to and from rehearsal engagements. Below, I refer to my fieldnotes in recounting certain conversations and statements Kifoko members made that dealt explicitly with this kind of reflexive work.[190]

[190] I have chosen not to quote directly from some of the cultural stereotyping that also contributed to the formation of a group image. Suffice it to say that imagined ethnic differentiations based on physical dispositions or performance capabilities, work ethic, and a range of other stereotypes were drawn upon at various times, and none of the major ethnic groups—including the Maroons—escaped comment. This is a practice that I found common among Surinamers in theorizing multiculturalism, and was by no means exclusive to the members of Kifoko. I do, however, think its existence and general contribution to these formulations requires mention.

DEVELOPING A COSMOPOLITAN AESTHETIC

The accounts below all address, in one way or another, the ways in which cosmopolitan "objects, ideas, and cultural positions (Turino 2000, 7)" are deeply implicated in Kifoko's rehearsal and performance activities. The scenarios depicted all relied on an active mediation of the group's performance activities on a conceptual and ideological level. I include these moments by way of example, as an illustration of how rehearsals also functioned as workshops through which the non-tradition oriented parts of their activities contributed to a sense of Kifoko's relationship to broader social and ideological trends. My fieldnotes appear in bold, with additional interpretation and commentary following each entry.

**11/26/09**
**After [the junior dancers] worked on their individual *waka kon*'s and *umanpikinfutu*'s[191], they did it once more as a group to the praise of the older members. Graciella scored it an "8 ½" [out of 10].**

The act of scoring by evaluation on a scale of 1-10 indicates a different mode of evaluation—one that resonates particularly strongly with Paramaribo's lively competition culture. Dance contests, music contests, multi-talent contests, beauty contests, and bodybuilding contests are only a few of the kinds of competitions that are a popular diversion for the city's residents.[192]

**[From the same rehearsal]:**
**When Graciella had finished working with one of the younger dancers, she called for [lead singer Lucia Pinas] to begin singing again by saying, "CD!" I have to wonder at the amount of self-awareness and sort of reflexive humor of her remark—it seemed to acknowledge that she was 'using' Lucia in a way that was abrupt and entirely based on the dancers' needs. (In other words, she was using Lucia in a manner more characteristic of a CD than of a 'live' *awasa* singer.) It also seemed to have something to do with rehearsals producing conditions that demanded this new kind of use.**

**3/27/09 Interview with Maria Dewini:**

[191] See Chapter 6 for an in-depth description of these dance steps.

[192] In fact, in 2008-2009, Graciella's elder sister, group leader Maria Dewini, acted as a judge for at least two culture-based competitions—the 2008 Awasa Festival, and the 2009 SaDumma ("Can-do Woman" Multi-Talent) Contest. Kifoko members John Binta, Herman Tojo, and Minio Tojo were crucially involved with the latter competition as accompanists and coaches.

**I asked [Maria's] opinion of [another Paramaribo-based performance troupe] and she had a few criticisms. The drums weren't 'right' to her, she didn't like how some people had their backs to the audience, and how they waited a long time before going on to the next thing. […] Maria said that [this same group] would do well by going back to 'the roots' of *awasa*. The steps that they know, they know. But there's more to be learned.**

Significantly, the elements that Maria critiqued in the first comment are an example of ways in which this group did not adapt to audience demands and cosmopolitan presentational style, whereas, in the second observation, she comments that the same group would benefit from deepening their knowledge of tradition. This prompts the question, is there no knowledge or cultural significance embedded in the manner of presentation itself? Further, these two comments echo different strands of Kifoko identification—first, their savvy at adapting performance genres to the stage; second, by suggesting the group needs to go "back" (a term that has temporal and geographical implications) to their roots, Maria not only implies that Kifoko as a group has a firmer grasp on this knowledge, but that, through the research work they undertook in the 1980's, Kifoko acquired that knowledge through the *action* that she recommends for this other group.

**10/5/09**
**Eddie made some comments about this being the beginning of a 'new Kifoko year,' [this rehearsal coincided with the beginning at the beginning of a new academic semester] and how you can think of the group as its own sort of school. [Member information forms] were passed out but not discussed.**

These forms were a new development for the group. His comment situated this new element within the logic of a school system, possibly likening this information gathering step to school registration. Additionally, it underscores the educational component of Kifoko's character and objectives.

**3/29/09**
**There was another interesting moment at the beginning of the rehearsal. We were dancing *loonsei* and Eddie said it was fine, but the group could make it more of a show. Maria countered that *loonsei* wasn't a very showy dance. Irma pointed out that we had rehearsed it with people soloing in the middle [of the circle of dancers] in previous weeks. It was then decided we would maintain a circle formation but, to use Eddie's words, "put some creativity in it" by turning around every once in a while, and dancing "with feeling."**

The process of adaptation and interpreting what characteristics are fundamental to a performance style is a subjective and highly interpretive one. On this occasion, three senior members of the group arrived at a performance solution aimed at balancing a desire for showmanship, while maintaining the (perceived) intrinsic character of the dance style being performed.

## The Discourse of Professionalism

Professionalism was one mode through which cosmopolitanism was exercised. Over time, I noticed some distinctive trends related to the circumstances under which this concept emerged as a

topic of conversation. First, professionalism was a word that coincided with estimations of the value of Kifoko's performances. In this way, the word signaled a need to uphold employers' standards of treatment, and to affirm the economic value of Kifoko's cultural 'product.' Professionalism was invoked as justification for group members' anger, frustration, or resentment related to money matters, specifically not exacting a price that members considered suitable, or in the related domain of experiencing dissatisfaction with not receiving adequate food or accommodations. Second, professionalism was a way that Kifoko members differentiated their practice and performance activities from those of other performance groups within the city or by other Maroons in varying contexts. Finally, professionalism was tied to notions of disciplined behavior; specifically, it was expressed as the ends to which discipline was the means.

Kifoko performers, as encountered through this discourse of professionalism, are not "merely" gifted musicians and dancers, educated in a traditional style. What this discourse makes clear is that, by virtue of the group's training, they have developed a *sense* or a *taste* (note that now we are in the realm of embodied perceptions that are thought to be 'second nature') for cosmopolitan aesthetic codes and modes of presentation. Of Kifoko's many attributes, it is the cosmopolitan codes—their underlying ability to perform professionalism and to perform as professionals—that members most frequently cited in conversations in which the economic value of their work was at issue.

Truly a cosmopolitan apparatus, the concept of professionalism and the nature of its connection to money matters appear to be translocal. In laying out his terminological framework for discussing musicians in Zimbabwe, Thomas Turino draws a similar distinction, writing, "I use the term *professional* to refer strictly to income-generating activity, whether or not specialized skill is required, and *speacialist* to refer to special skills and knowledge, whether or not money is involved (Turino 2000, 52)." However, Turino's definition misses the point that many Kifoko members were

arguing most adamantly (and one that I think many musicians in the US would also concede)—namely that, beyond possessing the requisite performance skills, being able to generate an income through one's craft *is also* a special skill, that a professional is not merely one who chooses to engage in income generating activities, but one who develops professionalist behavioral and aesthetic sensibilities and is able to deploy them successfully.

Several characteristics of Kifoko's brand of professionalism have been mentioned already. Kifoko dancers and choreography maintains a strong emphasis on straight lines and visual demonstrations of unity. When he led rehearsals, Minio Tojo enforced these features of aesthetic discipline by insisting that, between one performance piece and the next, all dancers stand up straight with their hands at their sides and no excessive movement or talking between dancers.

**Figure 7**: The members of Kifoko performing onstage at CCS, September 2011. While lead singer Lucia Pinas (Second in from the right) sings the introduction to a song, the other group members stand straight, in staggered rows, with their hands at their sides.

While this model reinforces visual space and stillness, these qualities were audible in the existence of silence and pauses in the group's sung material, wholly uncharacteristic of group performance of

these genres in a village setting.[193] In Maria's comment that she disliked how another performance troupe did not maintain a frontal orientation to the audience, we can detect an orientation toward presentation on a proscenium stage that many associated with professionalism.[194]

Wilgo Baarn, director of the Alakondre Dron Ensemble (which will be discussed shortly), lauded Kifoko for many of the qualities most directly tied to professionalism. He described to me his impressions of the group, saying, "If you go see Kifoko perform, then a couple things are [kisses his fingers] sweet! Then you're thinking, ay, it's nice with the group's organization. The group discipline is there. And they bring some developments into the group, with how they perform, they do modern things—they do things, and that is great."[195]

In addition to these staged elements, Kifoko members' professional training included a number of other characteristics. On many occasions, Eddie emphasized the value of being mindful of issues of time—arriving on time, finishing on time, and knowing how many genres to cover in an allotted amount of time were all indicators of a seasoned performer. In one rehearsal, Eddie remarked that many Maroon performance groups do not stop on time. These groups tended to get carried away, treating performances of any kind as though it was a *winti pee*, in which it is common for people to sing and dance even while on the brink of exhaustion. If you're playing *apinti*, Eddie conceded, you can't stop short if you haven't finished with the requisite drumming protocol. Otherwise, performers should stop when they are supposed to stop.[196] At a different rehearsal, I

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[193] The major exception to this statement would be the lead singer's introduction to a piece, in which he or she has a brief moment to embellish at will before the drums and koor enter, obliterating the momentary silence and enforcing the metrical framework that remains in place until the piece's conclusion. See Chapter 6.

[194] In considering Kifoko's basic rehearsal layout (as depicted on page 126), it becomes apparent that the organization of the female dancers enforces a proscenium orientation, even in situation where there is no stage.

[195] "Ifu I go see Kifoko perform, da wan two sani e [kisses his fingers] switi. Da I e luku taki ay, a switi nanga group orga. A group discipline de. En de tja aantal ontwikkeling kon in a group, bij pe den man e perform, de do modern sani, de do sani, en dat is prachtig." Personal communication, 2009.

[196] Recorded in fieldnotes, 10/14/11.

remember Eddie highlighting the same principle as one way not to feel cheated by employers who do not pay the group's asking price. In this situation, the principle changed character from showing deference to an employer's request to conveying the somewhat oppositional message, 'you get what you pay for.'

**2/16/09 [Kourou, French Guyana]**
**At the conclusion of a performance engagement, it was unclear what Kifoko's cut would be. As the different members discussed it, their status as professionals was constantly emphasized. Maria made a comment about how, when Kifoko was first starting up, everyone was constantly looking around, trying to figure out what was going on. Now they're professionals and can react quickly to mistakes and become synchronized once more.**

In negotiating the fees that the group would exact for a performance, members accorded value to taking a hard line, yet once the price had been agreed upon and a performance was underway, a true professional was one who could handle any unexpected glitches that might arise—in short, someone who could perform well even when conditions were not ideal. In the above fieldnote excerpt, Maria references Kifoko's adaptability as proof of their professional status and a justification for expecting a higher wage. Some of members' reactive and adaptive technologies can be developed within rehearsal, for instance by having less experienced members fulfill different performance roles if other core members of the group are absent. Others, I would argue, begin to be learned once a performer has joined the group of touring members.

## KIFOKO AND ALAKONDRE DRON: PERFORMING A MULTICULTURAL NATION

*I just got off the phone with [Alakondre Dron Founder] Henk Tjon, and his response [to my self-introduction] was kind of interesting. He said, "You're just studying the music of the Maroons? So you're not studying the music of the Creoles? Or the Hindustani? Or the Amerindians or the Chinese or the Javanese?" I couldn't tell, by the end of it, whether he was poking fun at me. There's no doubt about it, though. This is the man to talk to about nationalism.*
*Field Journal Excerpt, 9/12/09*

Alakondre Dron—"All Countries' Drums"— is the performance collective that most often represents Surinamese national culture at national and international events.[197] It consists of percussionists from five music groups, representing the five largest ethnic groups within the country—Hindustani, Creole, Javanese, Maroon, and Amerindian. Directed by Wilgo Baarn, and until recently under the leadership of the late Henk Tjon, Alakondre Dron celebrates Suriname's multicultural mix by showcasing its percussive diversity. Using as its ideological basis the fact that the drum is an important form of expression in each culture, the group explores the symbolic and musical interplay of unity and difference in performance. Select members of Kifoko have been included in the Alakondre Dron ensembles since the 1980's,[198] and in 2008-2009, these members maintained a busy rehearsal and performance schedule with Alakondre Dron throughout the year.

Given that playing the drum is a gendered activity in most of the societies represented, the core percussion ensemble has an overwhelming male majority. However for some events the group performs as 'Alakondre Dron Plus,' the 'plus' being the addition of six female performers who help to showcase the singing and dance elements from the Maroon and Amerindian groups. For larger events (with larger budgets), all five performing groups enlarge their participating personnel to include dancers in a collective called, 'Alakondre Dron Prisiri' ('All Nation's Drums Pleasure/Entertainment'). For their performance at the 10th "Carifesta" Caribbean Arts and Culture Festival in Guyana in 2008, the group toured with 90 performers—over twice the size of their standard Alakondre Dron Prisiri roster.[199] According to director Wilgo Baarn, having a large number of people on the stage helps to give a performance a more dramatic effect.[200]

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[197] Henk Tjon started the group in 1971, before Surinamese Independence, but the group solidified as a regularly performing entity with stable membership in the 1980's. He remained active as the group's leader until his death in 2009.

[198] These include former group leaders André Mosis and José Tojo, as well as current as of (2011) minister of regional development, Michel Felisie.

[199] These are approximate numbers as given by Baarn.

Baarn acknowledges that Alakondre Dron presentations carry a definitive political valence. He told me that, in earlier decades, there had been more talk of societal integration. But whereas the various governmental parties depend on the population to vote along ethnic lines, the majority (Hindustani-affiliated) party[201] did not support a cultural slogan that risked weakening their political base in the long run.[202] Accordingly, the wording changed, from 'integratie' (integration) to 'verbroedering' (brotherhood). Instead of a performance model like that of the Ghana Dance Company, in which an undifferentiated mass of dancers performs styles from the nation's various ethnic groups,[203] part of the wonder and the spectacle in the Surinamese model is that Maroon, Hindustani, Javanese, Creole, and Amerindian groups remain separate, retaining their ethnic significations and rendering convincing performances of their differences alongside one another. Baarn interprets the social message as inherently positive, exclaiming in an interview, "A mooi na a mosaic fu cultuur!" ('The beauty is the cultural mosaic!')

While many people enjoy Alakondre Dron's presentations and identify with their performance of "makandra libi" (living well together/ getting along), others, including Surinamese playwright Sharda Ganga, find that over the years these performances, and their attendant social ideology, have grown stale.

> As a performer and member of the public, present at two consecutive Carifestas, I have found myself increasingly confused by the main part of the theatrical presentations, a disorientation that grew into weariness and dissatisfaction with each performance visited. It

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[200] Baarn credits the group's development of that aesthetic to a group of Cubans who came to Suriname to study *apuku* (ritual) drumming in the early 1980's. They incorporated *apuku* into their performance at the Caribbean Festival of Arts and Culture (Carifesta) in 1981, but performed with an unprecedentedly large group—Baarn estimated 40 performers were dancing. He commented, "When you dance with 40 people, the thing is ballet!"

[201] Here I refer to the Vooruitstrevende Hervormingspartij (VHP).

[202] The Surinamese government has been characterized by Edward M. Dew as operating under consociationalism. See Dew 1994, 1. Dew discusses this political situation at length in Chapter 5 in *The Difficult Flowering of Suriname* (1996).

[203] See Iddrisu 2011.

> is out of this disconcerting sensation that this paper was born, an attempt to find out what exactly channels my discontent with the current state of the performance arts in the Caribbean, as presented on the stages at our most prestigious cultural gathering, the Caribbean Festival of Arts and Culture.
>
> What exactly fuelled my displeasure? Simply put, it was the feeling that we were stuck artistically somewhere in the seventies, and that with each passing Festival, and each passing year, we were transgressing into a comatose state of repeating ourselves artistically over and over again.

By claiming that these presentations of national culture are 'stuck in the seventies,' Ganga calls attention to the fact that, as times change, even the ways in which we create the illusion of unchanging forms must keep up. In other words, the presentation of traditions that we wish to appear as unchanging has to adapt in order not to collect the symbolic residue of the social and political moment in which it was crafted—in short, in order to avoid seeming dated. Ganga elaborates:

> Once upon a time exciting new things were happening with our theatre, using exactly the same ingredients as described above. The form it took on was what [Judy S.] Stone called the ritual theatre, and it was viewed as perhaps the most exciting new voice coming out of the Caribbean theatre. […] The interesting part of ritual theatre was that it abstracted meaning and form from different rituals and used them in a new construction, to tell our own stories, or to tell stories from everywhere in the world, through our own rituals. […] But the great experiment of ritual seems to have fallen still, at least in Suriname, as we watch one performance after another being recycled into another, without even a[n] attempt at creating new repertoire.

Baarn certainly does have plans to adapt the group's performance practices in the future. Among his ideas is the development of a performance style in which the dancers in Alakondre Dron Prisiri group "dance each other's culture"— for instance the Javanese dancers would perform *awasa* or the Creoles dance *kathak*.[204] In this plan, 'verbroederingspolitiek' (the politics of 'brotherhood') remains firmly in evidence. The new format would maintain Alakondre Dron's standard practice of having performers and segments of performance divided into distinct clusters, based on ethnicity.

[204] Note the different valuation of sound and movement that continues in this depiction. Baarn did not suggest that the musicians switch instruments or learn the rhythms associated with the different genres.

Whether each group's cross-representation would register more strongly as an image of cultural sharing, or instead emphasize ethnic difference is a matter of interpretation.

While Ganga expresses her frustrations in relation to nationalistic performance, many of the same issues undergird folkloric performance on a broader scale. Earlier I suggested that, following Abrahams, we interpret the performance of folklore (and folklorism) as a response to circumstances as they arise in social context, and that we take the need for reading the present in terms of an idealized past as the thread connecting disparate circumstances of performance.

## Conclusion

It is clear that the activities in which Kifoko engages are crucially tied to Maroon performance art, and yet they are not reducible to the group's stated objectives. Each rehearsal draws participants into the social politics of the group itself, and also involves them in the collective theorizing of how Kifoko relates to broader concepts, including professionalism and cosmopolitanism. I argue that this theorizing and the expression of collective values is both articulated through verbal discussion and demonstrated through the presentational aesthetics upon which they draw and the way individuals circulate within the rehearsal space. Through their participation in Alakondre Dron, touring members of the group engage in a related politics of representation through in sonic and spatial performances that underscore a nationally sanctioned practice of multiculturality.

Kifoko's rehearsal practices underscore a point that has been made convincingly in previous ethnographic literature—that, in the process of concerted engagement with a particular craft, skill, or sphere of knowledge, the embodied self who undertakes that endeavor is invariably changed. These issues have been explored in Dorinne K. Kondo's work on Japanese factory workers, in which the products of their labor and the social environment of its production are implicit in a conception of

the self in relation to gender, nation, and the company/family social structure. In *The Body Impolitic,* Michael Herzfeld takes up similar themes among artisanal workers in Crete. He claims, "Concepts of individualism and atomism, deeply rooted in the ideologies of European identity and its opposites, are worked out in the artisans' notions of aesthetic creativity, standards, and reproduction, reinforcing in this way the sense of a direct link between the way in which the members of a given culture apprehend the role of agency and the production of distinctiveness in artisanal objects (Herzfeld 2004, 52)."

Yet a point that I think warrants additional emphasis—one that a study of performance art is especially poised to address—is that the self is not transformed through work exclusively on an ideological level. In the performance arts, the embodied self is the worker, the raw material that is worked on, and even the apparatus through which the work is done. As a body develops different physical capacities, and as a person's physical appearance changes, the process of signification is changed in both action and form. Movement techniques, interactive sensibilities, and the basic musculature of the body itself all carry markers of an individual's embodied social practice.

Performers' bodies are no more stable than are the (external) "shifting fields of power and meaning (Kondo 1990, 11)" that pervade the Japanese workspace, or the fragile conditions of artisans' subsistence in Herzfeld's fieldsite of Rethemnos, Crete (Herzfeld 2004). Fat and muscle mass fluctuates, young dancers grow up, women's bodies change through pregnancy and recovery, and different capabilities for strength, stamina, and flexibility are gained and lost. As bodies change, so does the range of significations they carry, both at rest and in action. In Chapter 1, I introduced the notion of 'playing the changes' as a useful frame for considering the skills that are honed and lauded through the activities of groups like Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba. I include within the scope of that concept the physical changes of the signifying, performing body.

# Chapter 4: Saisa

In the previous chapter, choreography was one of the contributing elements to Kifoko members' practices and presentations of multiply signifying selfhood. In this second group profile, choreographic issues come into greater focus. While all three groups made use of a range of choreographic strategies, Saisa had a distinctive performance style, featuring fast-changing geometric configurations and routines with thematic content. Here, I consider their choreography from multiple perspectives. I discuss the need for innovation as being heightened by the group's practice of producing CD's and DVD's for commercial sale, and also the process by which new routines were introduced to the group or older, partially forgotten routines were revived. In the latter part of the chapter, I focus specifically on three choreographies that present narrative content. In different ways, each routine combines references to distinctly Maroon social and performance practices with other references that help to assert cosmopolitan elements of performers' life practices.

Alongside these choreographic dimensions of performance, I highlight two characteristics of Saisa's organization that had a profound influence on their activities group character as experienced from 2008-2009. These are: 1.) their at times strained relations with Tangiba, a dance group with a membership that included several ex-members, and 2.) the ties the group and its individual members fostered with the village of Santigron. This village is unique in its proximity to the city, allowing its residents and former residents to maintain connections to a degree that is not normally possible.

## History/Founding

The group Saisa got its beginning through a conversation between George Lazo—a Saramakan living in Paramaribo—and Ronald Venitiaan, a Creole politician who was then

Suriname's Minister of Education and would later become President of Suriname.[205] Lazo was interested in creating a cultural initiative whereby the many residents of his village who lived in Paramaribo could maintain the performance forms that were so important in his village. Their discussion provided the impetus for creating a new performance group; one that had as its mission the support and development of a particular village community, with special attention paid to younger members. With government assistance in securing a rehearsal space at a public school in the neighborhood of Latour, and other members of the Santigron community began to organize interested performers.

Initially, organizers envisioned three separate groups, divided by age, but it quickly became apparent that the membership was not large enough, nor was the age range sufficiently dispersed to support three groups. The founding members numbered roughly 25, eight of whom continued to rehearse and perform regularly with the group in 2008-2009. Of the 25 original members, most were in what would have been the middle age group, falling into an 18 to 30-year age range. At the time of founding, there was an absence of veteran performers whose knowledge of the dance genres was extensive, however, the close proximity of Santigron allowed the initial members to seek counseling and advice on performance matters. As indicated by the group's name, Saisa's early repertoire consisted of *songe* and *awasa*. *Bandammba* was added shortly thereafter, followed by *susa*, *kumanti*, and *awawa*.

In 1994, the group was asked to leave their performance space because of the amount of noise rehearsals generated. The group then relocated to the neighborhood of Ramgoe. Group

[205] This story was told to me by Saisa group leaders Eduward Fonkel and "Dansi" Dansiman Alyosis Waterberg. Lazo and Venitiaan are related through marriage.

leader Dansi Waterberg converted the back of his house into a performance space,[206] where the group had been rehearsing ever since.

Leadership

As with Kifoko, there were two primary leading figures to Saisa. Dansi Waterberg had been the leader of Saisa throughout the group's history. Eduward Fonkel (frequently referred to as "Boss" by the other group members) took the most active role in leading the rehearsal. Both individuals had been involved with the group since its founding. Dansi was considered the group authority on drumming matters, while Eduward was more involved in directing the singing and dancing components of rehearsal.

A number of other members took secondary leadership roles. Silvana, one of the group's primary singers, was often put in charge of notifying members of last-minute gigs or handling other coordination issues. Jillh, another senior member of the group, often directed newer members through choreographed routines, or would remind the rest of the group of how older routines that the group was trying to revive went together.

A Typical Saisa Rehearsal

Getting off the bus at Ramgoelaweg raised the occasional eyebrow or drew comment from my fellow bus passengers. Walking the several blocks to Laschmanweg at nightfall by myself, I stuck out considerably. This was not an area of town where one was likely to see *bakaasama* (foreigners, generally Caucasians). Ramgoe, as locals called it, was considered a rough neighborhood. Although there were several houses there that would not be out of place in wealthier neighborhoods, the area has developed a reputation for poverty and thievery. Locals often

[206] See 'A Typical Saisa Rehearsal' for a description of the space.

countered that in recent years Ramgoe had cleaned up considerably. People of all ages were outside in the evenings, from small children running errands, to street vendors selling 'worst' sausages, to clusters of adults and teens hanging out at street corners or in front of a "winkie," a local grocery store.[207]

My routine walk down this route over the course of roughly a year made me a marginal neighborhood fixture. Gradually, the locals learned various bits of information about me and circulated it through their informal networks, so that by the end of my stay in Paramaribo, people would call out to me on my walk, asking if I was going to rehearsal, or greeting me in one of the Maroon languages. If bystanders spoke to me in Dutch, other residents often informed them that I was from the US, or if someone made a lewd comment in one of the Maroon languages, a friend would often hiss that I could understand (which was true about half the time).

The ways through which I became marginally 'known' in this neighborhood speak to the channels for dissemination and the sense of collective propriety that are often cultivated in neighborhood communities. Saisa may associate most strongly with the village of Santigron, and group members lived in a variety of different neighborhoods throughout the city, but the Thursday evening traffic of Maroons from Santigron along Ramgoelaweg, and the sounds of the drums that echoed down Laschman Way from Dansi Waterberg's house were intimately known throughout the neighborhood. The group added to the compilation of local character and events that helped to foster a deep connection, tying the population to that particular neighborhood.

Through repetition, these rather large gatherings had been absorbed into the social mechanisms of the neighborhood, rendering Saisa's sounds and even its membership a contribution to Ramgoe's distinctive character. The routines involved in getting to, participating in, and departing from rehearsals created relationships and interactive expectations of not only group

[207] "Winki" is an adaptation of the Dutch word,'winkel', meaning store.

members, but also family members, local residents, and others. Rehearsing in a neighborhood fostered this sense of ownership and ties to the local community in ways that prompted a feeling of local pride. The places where many group members lived tended to recruit the most local group.

Saisa rehearsals took place in back of Dansi Waterberg's house, at the end of a dead end street. A rectangular space had been cleared for rehearsals, the floor cemented in order to make a dancing surface for the group, and a small storage area doubled as a changing room for dancers. On one wall there was a chalkboard on which was kept members' phone numbers, the dates and locations of upcoming gigs, and often drawings or diagrams related to dancing. There was a roof overhead, but no walls. A water cooler was always full and waiting for members when they arrived. Dansi's two dogs were kept nearby in pens and would erupt in barking at random intervals throughout the night.

The drummers occupied a long bench at the far end of the rehearsal space, behind which there was a corrugated metal divider and an unused patch of dirt and brush just beyond, where male members might change a sweaty shirt, take a piss, smoke, or talk on a cell phone. Female members, children, and female visitors tended to occupy the wooden alpine chairs and benches that lined one of the long sides of the rectangular space.

Carlos and Ralph, the two principal male singers, stood behind the drummers, while Pepa and the other female singers stood to the drummers' right. Female dancers who were not actively dancing during a given number would stand alongside Pepa and would also keep time by dancing *boli wataa*. Male dancers did the same on the drummers' opposite side. The dancing space was small and could accommodate a maximum of eight dancers at a time (two rows of four dancers, facing each other).

Opposite the drummers, Dansi's wife, Grieta, regularly stationed herself on a worktable and would observe rehearsals while sewing *pangi* wrap skirts or assembling kawai that she sold at the local market. Dansi could be found perched on a worktable in the corner, several feet away. Here, he and several other men—elder drummers, should there be more drummers than drums at a given rehearsal, but also members of the community—would often have beer or liquor on hand and talk quietly among themselves as the rehearsal progressed. Friends, family members, and neighborhood kids (some already dressed in their pajama's) frequently dropped by to socialize quietly or to observe the rehearsals from the sidelines. Less often, young children would try to dance along, off to the side and away from group members.

While Kifoko and Fiamba both arranged dancers in rows facing the audience, at least half of Saisa's routines involved dancers facing one another or facing the drummers. As a result, even though onlookers congregated roughly where an audience would be located[208], people could enter and leave the rehearsal space somewhat inconspicuously.

Set-up

At some point while members were congregating, a group member would begin taking the drums out of their designated storage space and begin setting up for rehearsal. Those who drummed regularly for the group might play casually in the midst of conversation. Singers or dancers (both male and female) who were interested in the drums often used this time to practice as well. Depending on their skill level, they might try to hold the *tun, kwakwabangi,* or *pikin doon* part, or more advanced players might practice combining the various parts into a continuous groove.[209] If

[208] This could be determined in relation to the drums. Saisa drummers always faced the center of the audience.

[209] Steven Feld writes, "Instantly perceived, and often attended by pleasurable sensations ranging from arousal to relaxation, "getting into the groove" describes how a socialized listener anticipates pattern in a style, and feelingfully participates by momentarily tracking and appreciating subtleties vis-á-vis overt regularities." (Keil and Feld, 1994: 111).

the groove got derailed players would stop and re-collect, directing some good-natured jokes at the player(s) responsible for getting them off track. As more drummers trickled in, dancers and singers relinquished their seats and instruments to them and members prepared to begin the rehearsal proper.

Whereas Kifoko and Fiamba rehearsals were generally started by an official leader, Saisa rehearsals could be started by any member who grew impatient with waiting or was eager to begin. A drummer or singer might indicate this verbally, while dancers could make this clear by changing into rehearsal clothes, tying *kawai* around their ankles, and standing at attention. Other members were generally quick to catch on and follow suit.

The Rehearsal Proper

Warm-ups were not a common feature of rehearsals, but they were included occasionally. When this was the case, they were based on the basic positions of awasa, the main objective of these exercises was to strengthen the thigh muscles, allowing dancers to maintain the crouching position of awasa for longer durations. More often, however, a rehearsal would start directly with *awasa* and continue through the various genres in the same order they would be presented in performance—*awasa, songe, bandammba, susa, kumanti.*

Saisa's progression of genres did not allude from a preexisting traditional model, as was the case with Kifoko and the *gaansama pee*, however their system was informed by a practical and performative logic. The group started with *awasa*, a genre that establishes the character of the group as a performance collective. The genres progressed from the most choreographed to the least choreographed. The genres *susa* and *kumanti*, which were the most unpredictable and often introduced social and performance imperatives that could not be planned in advance, were always

The grooves I reference here are musical patterns that, through repetition and other musical properties, facilitate this kind of audience response.

the last to be performed, before ending with a final, loosely choreographed *awasa* routine that highlighted all of the dancers and reestablished *awasa* as the group's dominant genre. *Awasa* consistently received the most attention and practice; *songe* and *bandammba* both received a fair amount of attention, and *susa* and *kumanti* were rehearsed infrequently. As with Kifoko and Fiamba, they maintained the same order of performance in their rehearsals.

Singing Rehearsals

Saisa is distinct from Kifoko and Fiamba in that they have a number of CD's and DVD's that are commercially available. During the period of my involvement with the group, they were working on a CD, to be released in January 2010. To this end, several rehearsals were devoted either exclusively or in large part to singing. Such occasions had a much different feel to them than the Kifoko singing rehearsals, in that they were connected with a short-term goal as opposed to a general practice. Both groups paid attention to tone quality and clarifying lyrics, but Saisa rehearsals addressed additional issues including group balance, timing, and experimentations with various harmonies. Saisa had two veteran singers—Silvana Pinas and Carlos Pinas—but three additional members were featured as lead singers on the CD.[210] There were frequent pauses in singing rehearsals as well as full-on rehearsals in order to advise and correct these members who had begun singing with the group more recently. Most group members were more fluent in the Saramakan language than in Okanisi, yet most songs were in Okanisi, seeing as they specialized in *awasa*, a dance from the Ndyuka subgroup. As a result, it was also common for the group to pause to clarify grammatical or vocabulary-related questions about song lyrics.

[210] Deborah Waterberg, Ralph Marciano Plein, and Tanya (Last name unknown.)

A Characteristic Rehearsal Scenario[211]

Djomo is at the *gaan doon*. As he goes through a series of drum phrases, the side conversations diminish. We are waiting for the phrase we have all learned to recognize—"kaba kelle kelle"—that indicates he's finished with this opening section. Upon hearing the cue, Pepa "opens" a song. "A lobi de, mi yee fu I oo…" she begins a plaintive song she composed about a friendship she had that went awry. As she finishes the opening phrase, the drums come in, securing the tempo, and the singers and dancers all begin *boli wataa,* a gentle swaying step that keeps the pulse of the music and precludes any more strenuous dance moves. Four dancers have stepped up from the sidelines—two women, facing two men. The rest of the dancers and several of the drummers comprise a *koor*, or chorus, who sing a response phrase to Pepa's call.

Waiting for the drum to cue them, the four active dancers transition from dancing *boli wataa* in an upright position to the crouching posture of *awasa*, kicking their feet out a little before each forward step. The *kawai* ankle rattles accentuate their movements—"one-and-two-and-three-and-four," two shakes for every beat of the *tun* drum.[212] As they convene in the center of the rehearsal space, one of the dancers stamps his foot heavily[213], cuing the others that it is time to stop advancing and resume the upright posture of *boli wataa*. Dancers eye one another as they straighten their posture, trying to ensure that everyone is still swaying in a synchronized fashion—all four swaying toward the drummers, then away. There is a moment of confusion while the dancers figure out whether to assert their own direction or to accommodate the dancer opposite them by adopting their direction.

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[211] This is my reconstruction of a usual routine. Although informed by my experiences and fieldnotes from several rehearsals, this is not an account of any one isolated occasion, but rather an example of a general rehearsal practice.

[212] The tun drum provides an unwavering pulse throughout the performance of awasa. Every beat of the tun correlates with one step of the basic boli wataa pattern. More analysis will be provided in Chapter 6.

[213] This role was not designated to any specific individual; it could be performed by any active dancer. Most often, however, one of the men would perform this function.

They are performing a choreography called "cross" in which, after dancing with the person opposite them, they face the diagonal, taking turns switching places with their diagonal partner, while the other diagonal pair *boli wataa*. As each pair of dancers pass each other, they take a few seconds to "show off," dancing especially vigorously. The first pair act out a flirtation of sorts, the man isolating his lower back and pelvis while the woman dances in a demure fashion, with graceful movements of her arms and her eyes slightly downcast, mouth drawn into a playful grin. The second pair of dancers goad each other on, intermittently bowing their heads as they dance as a challenge to their partner, showing off their strength by dancing especially low to the ground. After two 'passes,' the dancers are back in their original places. They right themselves briefly to catch their breath, and then step backwards with the same shuffling step they used to advance to the center of the dance space.

As they reach the outer borders of the dancing area, Djomo cues the drummers to stop. All the drummers drop out at the same time, leaving those who had been singing *koor* and dancing *boli wataa* on the sidelines to hold the last note of the chorus.

Despite the entire dance sequence lasting only three or so minutes and the (relatively) cool evening air, the dancers are breathless. They mop the sweat from their bodies with a hand towel or kerchief and are absorbed back into the cluster of dancers on either side of the rehearsal space. Comments or suggestions are made, the next choreography proposed, and as the *gaan doon* starts up once more, those dancers who are ready or who know the designated choreography self-nominate by stepping slightly in front of the other dancers and standing at attention.

This and similar sequences of events happened countless times as Saisa rehearsed *awasa*. Rehearsal practices varied slightly as members danced *songe*, *bandammba*, or *susa*. *Songe* was danced in rotating pairs. Because there were generally more women dancers at a rehearsal than men, the

women often rotated (dancing opposite a male dancer, but then leaving the dance space in order for another member to dance opposite the same male dancer). The men stayed in the dancing space, dancing opposite two or three women before the drummers stopped playing. *Songe* was less comfortable and less familiar to most of the dancers. In part because members found *songe* less enjoyable, the group tended to rehearse it for a significantly shorter amount of time than *awasa*. *Bandammba* was danced as a solo for a female dancer, although at times a male dancer might share the dance space, playing somewhat of a supporting role. *Susa* and *kumanti* were less often rehearsed and tended to be freer in choreography—people could enter the dance space as they wished.[214]

New Choreography

One important distinction between Saisa and the other two groups profiled here is the variety of choreographies they would use and their relative degree of complexity. From shifting geometrical patterns to danced mini-skits to orchestrated solos, a great deal of time and effort was put into creating new routines. Because choreographed routines and patterns were a signature of Saisa's style, rehearsals often involved creating a new choreographed routine, or refreshing an older number that members might have forgotten or that newer members did not yet know.

The exact process of creating these routines or teaching them to the group at large varied considerably depending on each piece's character. For those routines that had a mini-plot embedded in them, rehearsing involved understanding the storyline just as much as it involved rehearsing steps. Other choreography, such as "cross," described above, involved constant shifts in geometric configurations and re-pairing of dancers. Rehearsing these routines had much more to do with who goes where at what time. In either case, it was most common for the piece to be talked

[214] Spirit possession was common in both Saisa's version of *susa* and *kumanti* performances, and therefore more flexibility was required. (Spirit possession was not common, however, in the version performed by Kifoko. See Appendix C for details) In *susa*, dancers formed a circle moving counter-clockwise, and in *kumanti,* most often they would not create any formation, but rather dance facing the drummers.

out/walked through as a whole and then performed by some of the group's most accomplished dancers. If that went successfully, other members were encouraged to replace the initial dancers, or the initial dancers would trade roles or positions to ensure that they understood the piece and could perform it from a variety of different positions. In a performance, those pieces that had not been rehearsed frequently or recently were left to the more experienced dancers in the group.

Individuation

Over time, certain songs or choreographies came to be associated with specific individuals. While some songs could be performed by any of the group's singers, singers tended to perform their own compositions. With the majority of the songs Saisa performed consisting of singers' own compositions, the repertoire was highly personalized. With each number containing a variety of roles—whether sung, danced, or drummed—a single piece could be connected to multiple individuals within the group.

I, too, had a song associated with me. Carlos Pinas sang the song, which was about the French women who frequented the casinos.[215] Whenever he began singing it in performance, I knew that I was expected to dance. In other songs, I often sang the *koor*—the response chorus—and eventually it became established that I would take certain harmonies on certain pieces.

As members left the group, or should a member be absent, the pieces in which they played a large role retained a sort of associative residue, calling that person to mind for many members. In their absence, their song or dancing style was often evoked along with a comical imitation of that individual's mannerisms.

[215] Indeed, one striking (and, I thought, rather sobering) characteristic of Paramaribo was the proliferation of casinos, in a country where so few people could maintain a living wage. In downtown Paramaribo, most major streets housed at least one casino.

Closure

As 9PM approached, Saisa members began preparing to go home. While they packed up and changed their clothes, hydrating themselves and checking phone messages, they discussed upcoming performance engagements and worked out the logistics—where members should meet and at what time, who could not attend or had to come late. From that point, conversation often shifted to matters concerning performance practice or Saisa-related social issues. Dansi or Edywartu would mediate conversations, which often became animated, and comments were generally directed toward Dansi, as leader and group elder. Sometimes these conversations were officially concluded, while other times they travelled with Saisa members as they trickled out Dansi's front gate and strolled through the neighborhood on their way to their respective houses.

Saisa and Tangiba: Group Fission and a Quest for Differentiation

Although performance groups include a powerful sense of camaraderie at times, rotating membership as well as differences in aesthetic vision, opinions about leadership, or personal conflicts can all lead to discord and fracture. Changes in members' residence, work schedules, and lifestyle[216] often compel members to alter their routines, resulting in varying constellations of members, and consequently ever-changing social dynamics. Given members' interconnecting social networks, sometimes changing relationships outside of a group context—for instance the breakup of a romantic relationship, a family conflict, or even differing political stances[217]–can unsettle the social balance of a group, in some cases prompting members to defect.

[216] Changes might include student status, competing interests (for instance playing in a band or on a sports team), or having a child.

[217] See André Mosis's overview of Kifoko re: the effects of the Interior War, Appendix A.

Some of the most heated conflicts arise when members with special artistic talent or rising leaders with their own creative vision cease to get along with a group's official leaders. To give one example, Louise Wondel's disagreements with the members of Maswa led her to found her own group, Fiamba.[218] More recently, in 2007, leading dancer Dyaga Plein split off from Saisa after falling out of the good graces of Dansi Waterberg and other founding members of the group. Subsequently he started his own performance group, Tangiba.[219]

During the time of my research with Saisa, intra-group tensions between them and Tangiba were particularly high. Although Tangiba accrued a number of new members with no prior affiliation with Saisa, Tangiba's leader and a considerable number of the group's principal performers transferred to the group from Saisa. In the two years of Tangiba's existence, the group had been quite successful, performing at a number of events throughout Paramaribo and beyond. Dyaga was a drummer with Boi Fu a Ting, a popular *aleke* band that toured widely throughout the region. As a group leader, he was able to use his connections within performance networks to secure gigs and to promote their new group, further contributing to Tangiba's early success.

Whereas Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba differed from one another on key aesthetic points, Saisa and Tangiba were all but indistinguishable to a lay audience. Both groups had songs and choreography unique to their specific group, but the overall format of performances and rehearsals were nearly the same. Aesthetically, one group's songs or choreographies would have fit equally well in the other group, with rare exception. Indeed, members often learned their skills—whether

[218] See Fiamba's profile, Chapter 5.

[219] I have chosen not to dwell on the details of the breakup. Individuals narrate the events that caused the breakup differently, and to document the various grievances of the two sides seems a bit undiplomatic. Furthermore, the reasons for the split did not enter explicitly into the conflicts the groups were experiencing during my fieldwork.

dancing, singing, or drumming—from the same teachers.[220] Given the collaborative atmosphere that generated many of the choreographed pieces and the multiple opportunities for ownership of a single composition, it is scarcely surprising that the line between rightful ownership and poaching of creative material could be quite thin at times.

In response to the strained relationship between them, both Saisa and Tangiba created new songs that commented on their point of view and aired their various grievances. Saisa created two such songs—the first addressed false rumors that followed in the wake of the split between groups. According to Saisa, these were perpetuated by Tangiba members in order to secure gigs from people who had hired Saisa previously:

> *A lei de lei, u á booko, Saisa de ete, da u go luku ee.*
>
> *It's a lie they're telling, we haven't broken [up], Saisa is still here, then we'll see [meaning, essentially, see for yourself].*

A second song, transcribed and analyzed in Chapter 6, airs a related complaint—that Tangiba garnered their early success using Saisa's name (and, in some cases, their performance material).[221] Both compositions alluded to Tangiba without using their name, which made it possible to deny these meanings when confronted directly. In rehearsal settings and conversations among group members, however, there was no ambiguity about the Tangiba reference within these two songs. Reportedly, Tangiba also composed songs that shed light on their point of view, including one with the general message, 'if we're performing badly, say so.' Saisa members understood this message to be directed at them specifically.[222]

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[220] Dansi Waterberg, for instance, was the primary drumming instructor for Saisa, and those members who defected to Tangiba imbued the new group with the same opening phrases and playing style that had characterized Saisa.

[221] As a reminder, this is the point of view expressed by the members of Saisa. No doubt Tangiba members would narrate their early success differently. Having become involved with Saisa after the split was well established, I am not in a position to support either group's truth claims.

[222] Personal Communication, Delia Waterburg, 10/21/09.

Due to both groups' strong connections to the same relatively insular community,[223] intra-group tensions were as delicate as they were unavoidable. Not only were friendships strained as a result of this split, but family networks were as well. The members of the Santigron community at large were often in a position where group loyalty was a particularly sensitive issue. To give an example, should a person die who had relatives in both Saisa and Tangiba, the family then had to designate which group would lead *tuka*, a mourning dance performed on the evening of the burial, and which group would perform in the days to follow. After making their decisions, the event organizers would have to justify their choice and assure the group with the lesser role that they were of equal importance as community members and of equal caliber as performers.

Inevitably events involving the Santigron community would attract members from both groups, however some members made it a point not to attend (or at least to remove themselves from the immediate vicinity) at times when the other group was performing. Many close intra-group relationships did remain strong despite group politics. However, when Saisa members aired grievances against Tangiba, even those who remained close with individuals from Tangiba often voiced ambivalence, if not outright disapproval of the group as a whole.[224] The ways in which these animosities affected the creative output of the groups will be discussed later in the dissertation.

It is important to know something about the tensions that existed between Saisa and Tangiba for the simple reason that their strained relationship was a focal point of discussion and a

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[223] Note that Tangiba is the first name of the founder of Santigron. By choosing this name, group leader Dyaga Plein ensured that this new group would keep the Santigron connection just as prominent and explicit as in the name Saisa. In an interview, Dyaga recounted how the name came to him in a dream.

[224] As a member of Saisa, I was less privy to Tangiba's reactions to Saisa's activities, however it was clear that, under certain circumstances, their response to Saisa could be equally icy and suspicious.

constant consideration in the group's actions during the term of my fieldwork. Beyond this, however, there are a number of reasons their case merits special attention.

While there may have been moments when Saisa, Fiamba, and Kifoko fell into competition, the conflict between Saisa and Tangiba was of an altogether different nature—it was a rivalry, and it was deeply personal. It involved friendships and family networks, hometown loyalties, as well as issues of creative ownership. In a sense, the degree of tension between Saisa and Tangiba serves to highlight the absence of such vehement animosity between other groups within the city.[225] By examining the abundant similarities between Saisa and Tangiba, the differences between Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba come into greater relief. The anxieties that Saisa expressed in relation to Tangiba—that event organizers would choose the new group over them (whether because they were misinformed or they found the other group in some way preferable), that Tangiba would emulate Saisa's performance style or even copy certain choreographies verbatim, that Saisa would continue to lose members to Tangiba—all draw attention to the absence of such concerns in relation to other groups. Saisa's audience, performance style, and membership all activated a subset of the population that might be interested in Maroon performance that was not threatened—at least not to the same degree—by the existence of other groups, including Kifoko and Fiamba. The relatively peaceful coexistence of the three groups with which I worked reveals just how much room for distinction there is in representing and performing for the Maroon communities of Paramaribo.

Out of all the networks that a performance group could access, all the ways of presenting a genre, all the possible genres a group could present, Saisa members found themselves in the frustrating position of competing with a group that ran parallel to their own in so many respects. Through Saisa's efforts to distinguish itself from Tangiba, the group's members responded to the

[225] While my participation in multiple groups strained relationships within each to some degree, to participate equally in Saisa and Tangiba was out of the question as a result of intra-group tensions.

challenge of distinguishing themselves[226] by creating new choreographies and songs, by adding a new genre to their repertoire, and by adding a (white) visiting ethnomusicologist to their membership roster.[227]

## CHOREOGRAPHING A SITUATED SELF: CONNECTIONS AND DISTINCTIONS IN PERFORMANCE

*Everyone was dressed and ready to perform—the women in pangi wrap skirts and hand-sewn blouses, the men wearing their kamisa loincloths and banja koosu, capes hung loosely from one shoulder. That night's audience was a group of Dutch tourists, rounding out a brief stay in Paramaribo before embarking on an extended tour of the rainforests to the south of Suriname's capital. Saisa had invited me to come along as a fellow performer.*

*As we all took our places, I noticed I had forgotten to take off my watch. Remembering the performance protocol I had learned through years of dancing traditional styles from various societies as a student and dancer in the US, I turned to drop off my watch in the changing room before the performance began. Silvana, one of the group's lead singers, stopped me as I was walking and asked where I was going. When I told her, she laughed at the notion that it might be inappropriate to perform with this accessory, elbowing the dancer next to her and repeating what I had said. Still laughing, she turned me back in the direction of the performance space and told me, 'No, keep your watch.'*

In what follows I investigate strategies whereby performers can represent music and dance genres that have strong cultural associations without suppressing or omitting from performance those parts of their life experiences that do not directly affirm their authority as a bearer of a singular tradition. Drawing from Saisa's repertoire, I focus on three choreographies of *awasa*. The routines I analyze here use combinations of various Maroon and non-Maroon points of reference to craft distinctive stories that have in common a potential to disrupt an easy conflation of cultural isolation, authenticity, and overall performance quality or value. My purpose in so doing is to highlight the

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[226] This is related to one of Kenneth Bilby's main theses from his dissertation—that, in multiethnic communities like St. Laurent, the most charged rivalries tended to sprout up between those groups that appeared to have the most in common. Bilby's discussion addresses these issues in light of a political situation in which the Aluku, who are recognized as French citizens, have fallen into competition for resources and political benefs with the Ndyuka Maroons, who are not recognized as French citizens. In this situation, the differences between these closely related societies are invested with great social significance.

[227] Saisa members were aware of my involvement with Kifoko and Fiamba, but given that they circulated in different networks within the city, these other groups were only a peripheral concern. Within their social networks, I was associated with Saisa. Also related to the issue of creating and emphasizing distinguishing features between the two groups, I find it somewhat surprising that Saisa sought to develop their own novelty as opposed to playing up their authority and experience. They did not play any sort of authenticity card.

creative means through which Saisa membres are able to change the relational dynamics between audience and performer.

The choice of whether or not to 'keep my watch' in the above vignette was, in essence, a decision whether or not to strip off those visual referents that were not explicitly part of Maroon culture. The movement vocabularies and subject matter employed in choreographed works can entail similar sorts of choices. Through them, dancers decide whether and how to include a broad range of experiences in the performance of a genre that is so deeply associated with tradition.

Each of the choreographies presented here has a narrative arc that diverse audiences can follow, regardless of their social backgrounds or life experiences. However, they all contain additional layers of significance that reward members of the group's (urban) local community, and those who can recognize movements borrowed from a variety of sources, from village life to internationally circulating dance videos. Drawing on these multiple sources helps to generate performances to which audiences can relate, whether they are cultural outsiders or members of the Maroon community.

In some cases, these additional layers of meaning, understood by a subsection of the audience, create a narrative subtext, or can otherwise inflect the way the overall narrative is understood. Relevant to this phenomenon is James C. Scott's concept of the hidden transcript, which he defines as part of "a discourse that takes place "offstage," beyond direct observation by powerholders" (Scott 1990, 4). The various and privileged semantic layers that are operative in the choreographies to follow belong to a third category, a politics of disguise, which Scott situates in a realm between public and hidden transcripts. Scott notes that the processes in this third category can create anonymity, therefore diminishing the speaker's accountability for the message. (ibid.,19) Yet I think the partially concealed elements in the choreographies analyzed here have an altogether different function; the points at which dancers *emphasize* personalization and social specificity are

instrumental to the success of these hidden meanings. In groups involved in cultural representation, anonymity can be a controlling force, rather than a means through which critiques of domination can be aired more freely. I argue that, in a performance environment where distinctions between personal experience and a general narrative can be a liability, getting audiences to focus on a specific performance group or an individual (rather than on Maroons more generally) is one way to avoid being trapped in a discourse of ethnic essentialism that discredits Maroons' urban and cosmopolitan experiences.

While many of the examples Scott uses to ground his theories involve direct subordination,[228] power is decentralized in the context of these performance groups. Although there are several political and economic structures that enforce it, domination is most clearly presented in public discourse—in habitual ways of talking about culture, tradition, power, social and political mobility. It is through everyday discourse (in which they, too, take part) that urban Maroons are most likely to be devalued from all sides.

Motivations for Cultural Conservatism: Empowerment, Economy, Conformity

Performers' motivations to downplay signs of participation in other social, cultural, or commercial networks can be fueled by factors within and outside of the societies being represented. Clearly, pressures can emerge in response to the tourism industry and the images it perpetuates of an "untouched" land, populated by equally "untouched" Maroon and Amerindian societies. Further, among the Suriname Maroons, muting non-Maroon influences might be done in a spirit of cultural pride or solidarity—Kifoko, had at various times encouraged its members to sport only traditional hairstyles or talk exclusively in Maroon dialects during performance, even if these members may act

[228] Scott draws upon literary examples from George Orwell and George Eliot, as well as lived accounts under conditions of slavery, serfdom, and caste subordination.

or present themselves differently outside of a performance context. At other times, representations of isolation might be a performance tactic used to the Maroons' political advantage. For instance, cultural distinction can be used to call attention to the hard-won land rights to which many contemporary Maroons feel entitled—based on the peace treaties of the Maroon Wars— and that the Surinamese government is particularly keen to dissolve under the auspices of a united country with equal citizenship. A unilaterally recognized equal citizenship would serve to delegitimate Maroons' objections to the government's many contracts with international logging and mining operations, which infringe on Maroon land and ignore their rights to jurisdiction thereover.

Finally, a disavowal of the ongoing absorption of ideas and trends beyond the local or culturally specific is itself part of a cosmopolitan aesthetic of presentation.[229] 'Cultural music' and 'cultural dance' are enduring trans-cultural and trans-national frameworks for the consumption of local and regional styles. Earlier, I recounted how my own impulse to discard my watch—a symbol of participation in cosmopolitan[230] networks—arose from assumptions and performance practices I had adopted uncritically until Silvana's question prompted me to consider my actions more closely.[231] While this particular convention of cultural presentation was one that Silvana found novel and humorous, other changes that Saisa had made in adapting these traditional dance genres to a

[229] Thomas Turino has written extensively on topics of folkloric presentations as cosmopolitan practice, particularly in relation to establishing a national identity on a global scale. See especially: Turino 1987, 2000.

[230] My understanding of cosmopolitanism is informed by Thomas Turino, who uses the term "to refer to objects, ideas, and cultural positions that are widely diffused throughout the world and yet are specific only to certain portions of the populations within given countries (Turino 2000: 7)." Turino stresses that cosmopolitanism is manifested differently in each locality, yet are connected by different forms of media, contact, and interchanges that are not necessarily linked by geographic proximity (ibid.: 8).

[231] For pertinent reflections on the representational dilemmas that accompany teaching performance-based courses in a university setting, see Locke, 2004: 178.

staged format showed the group's awareness of and participation in cosmopolitan models of cultural presentation.[232]

Whatever the motivations for presenting these arts (and their practitioners) as existing apart from the porous boundaries and fast-paced information exchanges that characterize contemporary life, this is a performance strategy that proves especially problematic for urban music and dance groups like Saisa, operating at a distance from the rainforest land and village settings with which Maroon culture is so closely associated.[233] Ironically, the factors that lead some to challenge the extent of folkloric group members' knowledge and skill—namely their urban location and participation in a variety of social, consumer, and media networks—are the very ones that facilitate these groups' involvement as cultural representatives on regional, national, and international levels.[234]

Binary Slippages: Place, Time, and the Illusion of Contradiction

In Chapter 2, I discussed a number of the words used to classify Maroons, and the extent to which these terms are caught up in binary oppositions; distinguishing between Busikondeesama (people from, or of, Suriname's interior) from Fotosama (people from, or of, the city) underscores the symbolic importance of place. Likewise, terms like *loweman* and Maroon, both of which focus

[232] Among these features were the use of unison movement, the ordered and regulated framework through which audience members were encouraged to participate, and the introduction of complex choreographed routines, including the three I explore in this chapter.

[233] I am aware that the choice to include a white researcher in their performances was also a choice of group representation that pertains to my argument. No matter the way in which my presence as a guest performer influenced audience interpretations, or may have been part of a representational strategy, I see my participation as an interesting issue on which to speculate, but one that does not compromise the choreographic analyses that I explore here. My argument has a stronger emphasis on self-representation in choreographed pieces, as opposed to how fellow members (or guest members) affect a group's image and promotional strategies.

[234] Saisa performed for a wide range of events. These include Maroon birthday parties and funerary rites, national and regional festivals and celebrations, and from time to time performances further afield. The most recent of these bigger trips came in 2007, when they were invited to perform for delegates from the UN in New York City.

on escape from slavery as the distinguishing characteristic, establish a fundamentally antagonistic relationship to Suriname's urban coast

As with dichotomies like urban/rural, or modern/traditional, these binaries are powerful but intrinsically problematic tools in local discourse. When such dichotomies are strung together, the assumptions they can generate become increasingly convoluted. Because urban Maroons do not align uniformly with either side of the binary structure's slanted fence, (as when urban spaces are juxtaposed with traditional practices), such elisions make the lived experiences of Maroon cultural participants who are also urbanites appear to be a contradiction in terms; they become, to use Mary Douglas's famous phrase, "matter out of place." In order to uphold the binaries, then, one of the traits is usually presented as dominant (for instance, a person will be discussed as more a city dweller than Maroon, or vice versa), and thus processed through yet another dichotomy.[235] Thus, despite the fact that more Maroons live in urban locales than in villages and camps, their experiences in these other settings where they live and work are seen as culturally peripheral, or even antithetical to Maroon cultural symbolism.[236]

Saisa and Santigron

Saisa's position within this already complex picture is further complicated by the group's close ties to Santigron, a village that does not align easily within any of the binary structures

[235] The way in which urban Maroons are participants in urban and Maroon discourses while occupying a peripheral position in each and, as a result, are perpetually in the position of having to argue for inclusion, is strikingly similar to Suriname's situation as a marginal player in both South American and Caribbean collectivities. Like in the urban Maroon example, Suriname's divided international affiliations are most often conceived of as a tension between cultural (Caribbean) and geographical (South American) ties.

[236] Again, I am talking about discursive practice and not Maroon lifestyles or social proficiencies. These are, as I have been arguing, incredibly dynamic—much more fluid and integrated than social discourse tends to acknowledge.

mentioned above.[237] Their name—**S**onge nanga **Awasa I**ni **SA**ntigron ([Dance genres] Songe and Awasa in Santigron)—makes explicit Santigron's central importance to this particular group. Nearly all of Saisa's membership consists of past and current residents, and the majority of their performances involve the Santigron community, whether in Paramaribo or the village itself. The strength of these connections between Saisa and Santigron give the group a distinctive character. Whereas village connections, however distant, tend to serve as cultural authenticators for urban Maroon populations, the ambiguous status of Santigron as a village with a somewhat suburban character only further emphasizes that rural and urban spaces, and the social practices of each, are in actuality both interactive and at times difficult to demarcate.

At the turn of the 20th century, Suriname's coastal population was steadily changing. After slavery was officially abolished in 1863, Maroons came to the urban coast in search of work in greater numbers. With their advanced knowledge of the jungle and of Suriname's riverways, Maroon laborers were desirable to lumber contractors and other employers interested in harvesting Suriname's natural resources. In response to these changing social circumstances, a Saramakan man named Tangiba Kwao founded the village of Santigron in 1900.[238] This new village attracted Maroons whose work drew them to the coast and the outlying plantations, but who wanted to continue living in a village atmosphere. Then as now, the village was easily accessible by both land and water.[239]

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[237] Santigron is by no means the only village that, by virtue of its location and cultural affiliations, complicates a simple juxtaposition of an urban, multiethnic coastal population and remote, homogenous village communities further inland. Other examples of villages that share a similarly ambiguous status, albeit as a result of different historical and geographical circumstances, include Nieuw Koffiecamp, Saa Kiiki (Sara Creek), and the Cottica Ndyuka.

[238] The name Santigron is a compound word: *santi*—sand/sandy, and *gron*— ground/earth/place, after the village's particularly sandy banks along the Saramaka River.

[239] By motorized canoe or by car, it takes roughly an hour to travel from Paramaribo to Santigron.

Emerging from the social conditions of post-abolition Suriname, Santigron's founding narrative is profoundly different than what might be expected of an older village. By and large, Santigron was created by Maroons moving toward the city, rather than by newly escaped slaves moving away from it. Whereas the inaccessibility of earlier Maroon establishments was strategic, Santigron's proximity and easy access to Paramaribo, outlying plantations, and lumber areas was intentional and deemed desirable. The population of this new village drew together Maroons from a variety of locations and with assorted ethnic affiliations that were by this point well established. While the village had a Saramakan majority, the Matawai and Ndyuka were also well represented.[240]

Despite these differences, Santigron retained a number of social and structural characteristics representative of Maroon villages in general. Although its residents recognized colonial rule, Santigron founded and maintained traditional Maroon forms of jurisdiction. Local conflicts continued to be addressed through conferences (*kuutu's*) with the village *kabiteni* and *basiya* (assistants to the *kabiteni*), appointed by the Saramakan Gaanman. In the center of the village is a *fakatiki,* a place of sacrifice where offerings are made to ancestral spirits. Kenneth Bilby (1989) noted that every Maroon village has a fakatiki, and this is an easy way to distinguish a village from a *kampu*, a Maroon community that may not be officially recognized as autonomous by Maroon leaders and is generally smaller in size. Santigron also has a *munu oso*, a menstrual hut, where women seclude themselves while menstruating, as is the traditional practice.[241]

Santigron's close proximity to the city provided residents with easy access to goods, materials, and amenities that were more difficult to obtain further inland. Visiting Santigron in 2009,

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[240] One theory explaining why there is such a prevalence of Aukanes dance styles is that, of the early inhabitants of Santigron, there were a number of Saramakan men who settled in the area with Aukanes wives. Owing to the amount of time children spent with their mothers growing up, children were likely to gain greater exposure to the traditions and activities practiced by the mother. (Personal communication, Soloman Emmanuel.)

[241] Women on their periods are thought to be capable of causing weakness or illness to men, and therefore are not supposed to cook for, sleep with, or touch men while menstruating. See S. Price 1994 for a more detailed discussion of this issue.

the village's dirt roads and pathways wound around an architectural patchwork of houses, from cement constructions with several rooms and running water, to traditional one-room houses with slanting roofs, low doorways, and no amenities. Most houses fell somewhere in between. Many residents had cars, and a public bus line ran regularly between Santigron and Lelydorp, the capital of one of the outermost districts of Paramaribo. The few bars and general stores were well stocked, and in the evenings, several houses enjoyed central electricity, the continuous low groan of power generators that is part of more distant villages' evening soundscapes was noticeably absent.[242]

In many ways, Santigron is ideally situated to take advantage of Suriname's growing tourist economy. This is one of the only Maroon villages that makes a convenient daytrip for tourists, and multiple tour operators have erected lodges nearby for those who wish to stay overnight. Santigron is particularly appealing to visitors who are curious about Maroon culture or about the rainforest interior, but who could do without the added time, discomfort, and expense of a journey further inland. One of the highlights of day and overnight tour packages is a performance of traditional song, drumming, and dance by Santigron residents. Arinze Tours, one of the larger tour agencies working in Santigron, enlists the help of local children in such performances, and many of the younger members of Saisa started performing for formal audiences through this organization.[243]

Yet Santigron is not merely a cultural attraction for tourists. Urban-based Maroons go to Santigron to learn about Maroon culture as well. Fellow Maroon performance group Kifoko made a trip to Santigron in the 1980's as part of their research initiative. More recently, the contestants of the SaDumma (Can-do Woman) Talent Contest went there as part of their educational training in

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[242] Many of Santigron's social and material features—including cement houses and general stores—are by no means particular to this village. However, I do think that the close proximity of Santigron to Paramaribo gave its residents easy access to many goods, and this greater availability was noticeable in a variety of the village's features, including houses with running water and well-stocked stores.

[243] Arinze tours was founded by Santigron native George Lazo. Children were compensated for their performances. See the official website: www.arinzetours.com.

Maroon culture. Through initiatives such as these, Santigron provides Maroons whose travels within Suriname are limited with valuable exposure to Maroon customs as practiced in a village setting.

Even in this brief description of Santigron, there are abundant examples of its dual nature, at once village-like, and in other ways decidedly uncharacteristic. One might notice the fakatiki and munu oso, the several resident kabiteni and basiya, the abundance of Maroon visual or performance art, and be struck by these markers of residents' active engagement in activities and life practices that could be called traditional. On the other hand, by focusing on the fact that the village was established relatively late (post-abolition) and has a particularly heterogeneous population, the conventional cement houses interspersed with more traditional architecture (some of which are wired for electricity)[244], the number of commuter residents who divide their time between Santigron and Paramaribo, and the ways in which creative efforts are often tied in with the tourist economy, Santigron and its residents can be seen as diverging from tradition as much or more than enforcing it.

Whereas Maroons and non-Maroons alike will at times dismiss city-dwellers categorically as 'not really' being practitioners of Maroon culture due to their existence outside a village setting (and therefore alienated from the life practices and modes of interaction the village environment facilitates), the residents of Santigron often find themselves and their interactions with Maroon culture discredited not (or not only) because they are alienated from village life, but rather because their village is not quite village-like enough—it was founded too recently, its population too heterogeneous, its location not quite remote enough to 'count' as traditional.

[244] It is interesting to note that the village of Santigron is wired for electricity, whereas Sunny Point, the outlying suburb of Paramaribo where many Kifoko residents live, did not have electricity or a reliable water source as of 2010.

At the time of writing, Santigron has approximately 2,000 inhabitants, however the vast majority—an estimated 1,550 of documented residents—split their time between the village and the city.[245] The members of Saisa are among the sizeable population that circulates regularly between these two locales. Their frequent return trips to the village distinguish their social routines and life practices from urban Maroons whose village connections are characteristically more remote, both geographically and experientially. While this easy access to both city and village is in some ways enviable, Maroons in Paramaribo who are connected to villages that are farther away and depart more obviously from an urban lifestyle tend to take great pride in the more pronounced differences between their (urban) place of residence and the places they are from.

Saisa's unique cultural affiliations have a variety of implications for their rehearsal and performance practices. *Songe* and *awasa*, the two most prominent of the five dance genres that the group performs[246], are both associated with the Ndyuka Maroons of Eastern Suriname, rather than the Saramakan Maroons, to whom the residents of Santigron have the closest cultural and geographical links. Of all the performance groups I studied, the members of Saisa spent the most time debating correct pronunciation of song lyrics delivered in Okanisi, the language of the Ndyuka, and various other performance conventions. These debates made clear to me both the importance that group members invested in 'getting it right,' and also that there were a wide range of opinions regarding what specifically that might entail.

## Three Choreographies[247]

[245] Personal communication, George Lazo, Arinze Tours founder.

[246] Saisa regularly performs the following genres: *awasa*, *songe*, *bandamba*, *susa*, and *kumanti.* The group has made several commercial CD's, on which they also include *awawa*, a genre of sung insults, traded between two individuals.

[247] The three choreographies analyzed here correspond with video examples 1-3 in 'Supplementary Materials.'

In Saisa's performances, the majority of the choreographies they presented had no explicit storyline. More often, the drama of the performance took the form of improvised interactions between and among singers, dancers, and drummers, or an audience's interest would be sustained by the shifting geometrical configurations that dancers created as they circulated within a dance space. (These complex patterns are part of the group's trademark style.) Yet I find that, in those choreographed routines that have an implicit narrative, the dancers in Saisa have created especially playful and sophisticated ways of asserting commonalities and differences between themselves and their audiences, no matter if their audience is a group of tourists or friends and family at a birthday party in Santigron.

The three choreographies I discuss below are all based in the *awasa* genre, yet in each of these examples, the narratives are sustained through pantomimed body movements that reference a range of mundane acts in daily life. Interspersed with these theatrics are virtuosic dance sequences in the *awasa* style, all of which have signature moves or nuances that relate to the storyline of the specific piece. The music performed throughout the routine is similarly representative of the genre.

One of Saisa's standard pieces, performed at nearly every event, consisted of a series of short solos by the group's male dancers. This piece starts off much like most others in Saisa's repertoire—a short introductory phrase by the lead drum is followed by a lead singer performing the opening verse of a song, unaccompanied. After the chorus and the drummers establish the musical framework of the piece, the featured dancers enter the dance space with a shuffling step. Once the soloists form a line, facing away from the drummers, the dancing stops, thus marking a change from Saisa's standard performance practice. The singers, too, stop swaying in time to the music. Surrounded by this stillness (which is entirely uncharacteristic of Saisa's general performance practice), each dancer steps forward from the line of dancers to present his solo, with the attention of onlookers and fellow performers firmly upon him. Once he has completed his performance, he

resumes his place in the line of dancers, thereafter nudging the next performer in line, as though that touch was bringing the next dancer to life. This pattern continues until all the dancers have completed their solos, at which point they turn and shuffle to the perimeter as a group.

Although the number of performers featured in this routine varied depending on who was able to attend a specific performance, the approach each dancer took in his own solo remained constant from one performance to the next. Some of these solos were largely improvisational, although the group members who chose to perform in an improvisational style did so in every performance, and they used the same manner of audience interaction or the same distinctive moves so often that these improvisations had their own signature style. Two of the members, however, based their solos on simple storylines, and it is on these solos that I focus in my first two examples. I begin with an analysis of group leader Eduward Fonkel's solo, which was always the first of the solos to be presented.

Eduward's Solo

*Wearing his banja koosu (cape) and kamisa (loincloth), Eduward stands in the center of the dance clearing. He pantomimes the act of unbuttoning a shirt and pants, hanging them on an imaginary peg. After brushing his teeth, he takes a shower, lathering himself with soap and toweling off once he's finished. Next he applies deodorant and puts on slacks and a button-up shirt. He finishes the sequence by spritzing himself with cologne (first his neck and wrists, then his private parts for comic affect). Freshly showered and ready to go, he admires himself in a mirror. Satisfied with his reflection and feeling good, Eduward finishes his routine with an energetic solo awasa dance.*

While Eduward's performance does convey a sense of psychological continuity—a man washes, changes clothes, prepares to go out, feels good about looking and smelling good, and dances to express his confidence and satisfaction—as a continuous sequence of events, it does not quite add up to a logical scenario. After washing, preparing for the day, wearing his slacks and his button-up shirt, chances are he would not then "poolo"—or show off—with his energetic dance moves. This strenuous dancing would get him sweaty and wrinkle his slacks, assuming they would be

accommodating enough for his deep knee bends to be possible in the first place. Clearly, he is not dressing in preparation for dancing *awasa*, but for some other social event. It is unclear where—if anywhere—we are supposed to imagine this character might be when he begins to dance; if his dancing takes place in the bathroom, he would likely have to contend with rather cramped quarters and a wet floor.

This logistical puzzle combines with a rather disorienting overlay of cultural signifiers. Before Eduward begins his awasa dancing, there is no element of his skit that signals a Maroon lifestyle. His character takes a shower as opposed to washing himself in a river or with a bucket and calabash, the clothes his character dons are not the traditional Maroon clothes Eduward wears to perform, but rather a button-up shirt and slacks. In his grooming regimen, he spends a significant amount of time unscrewing caps and wielding imagined products that can be easily identified by Maroon and non-Maroon audiences alike.

It is easy to imagine Eduward's performance as a re-enactment of his morning routine, all the more so for those individuals who know of his life and work outside of a performance context. Eduward is one of few Maroons within Paramaribo to secure employment as a police officer—a highly coveted well-paying and stable job. Due to his occupation, his regular dress code is more formal than that of the general population, including button-up shirts and trousers, and a general emphasis placed on appearing clean and well groomed. In performance, Eduward does not make specific reference to his work attire—he does not don a policeman's cap, for instance, or strap on his gun and holster. Yet even without such explicit cues, Eduward's solo creates an easy synthesis between two practices that feature especially prominently in his own life.

This performance prompts the question, when Eduward dances after the more theatrical part of his routine, is the audience to continue his established narrative, imagining that it is the character dancing, or rather dispense with the storyline and return to the present, watching a man

dressed in traditional attire performing an *awasa* dance in a conventional style? I interpret the danced segment of Eduward's solo as a performance by a composite of the performer and the character—the man in front of me wearing, as it were, both sets of clothes. His solo makes clear his range of physical and social fluencies. The result is a performance of simultaneous strains of continuity and social paradox that are in many ways symptomatic of the life practices of urban Maroons, and also particular to Eduward.

This personal choreography introduces a dialogue between various social actualities and an imaginative and hypothetical space. As in Eduward's case, the choreography might have a certain biographical valence, but at the same time it resists an explicitly literal interpretation.[248] The performer/subject boundary may be a site of play and ambiguity, undergirded by evidence of familiarity with the various external points of reference. It thus placies elements of the narrative within the realm of the dancer's personal experience. For instance, Eduward's motions when he holds an imaginary bottle of cologne or tube of toothpaste are so convincing because they belie the physical fluency and muscle memory that comes from repeated interaction with those objects.[249]

The manner in which Maroon and cosmopolitan elements are put into dialogue lend further nuance to the performance. Eduward's dance would read differently, for instance, if he performed the act of dressing in a cape and loincloth while wearing slacks and a button-up shirt. Rather than relegating the Maroon aspects of this double persona to an unnamed place and time, it is the cosmopolitan character who floats in spectators' imaginations, without any context beyond the bathroom door; it is Eduward, dressed in his traditional Maroon attire, who most fully occupies the

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[248] These are the kinds of functions that, I believe, led Scott to link this third realm, between public and hidden transcripts, as characteristically privileging anonymity.

[249] My thinking on performance relations between people and objects is influenced by Tomie Hahn, who advocated convincingly for devoting greater attention to these relationships in her talk, "Dancing wth Sensible Objects," delivered at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology. This paper is archived at: http://www.indiana.edu/~semhome/2011/program.shtml.

here and now[250]. Also of note, the cosmopolitan signifiers comprise the character's routine actions, while his emotional and expressive state is manifested most directly through his dancing. Considering the ordering of his actions and the way cosmopolitan and traditional signifiers are dispersed throughout his performance, out of the real and imagined clothes that Eduward sports in this solo, it is clearly his banja koosu and kamisa that he wears closer to his skin. I consider the order of the layers significant, in that the character's emotions—his satisfaction and confidence—are expressed through a distinctly Maroon cultural form; the features and activities that register as cosmopolitan have less emotional valence.

The first several times I witnessed this solo, it did not register to me as an explicitly cultural or political statement. I found the most immediate surprise was when, with no prior indication as to the content of the solo, Eduward's pantomime transformed the dance space into a bathroom. I was startled by the intimacy of the scenario, the man in front of me—the leader of the group, no less—symbolically naked, performing an especially private aspect of a daily routine. In the care with which he prepared his toilette, his actions and facial expressions as he faced his viewers as though facing a mirror, the myriad of gendered social ideals that can be read through this theatrical canvas, his narrative struck me as a personal representation rather than one that was intended to represent a collective.

It was later, reviewing video footage of a recent performance that I realized the mixture of associative frames at play between the man, the character, and the physical fluencies associated with place and culture. Although audience members can read the situation through an analytic or cultural

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[250] In his landmark work, *Time and the Other*: *How Anthropology Makes its Object* (1983), Johannes Fabian considers at length the practices through which anthropologists and scholars in related disciplines create the appearance of spatial and, especially, temporal distance between the researcher and those who are researched. Fabian identifies these strategies as complicit in a 'denial of coevalness,' which Fabian defines as "a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referents of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse" (Fabian 1983:31). I argue that Eduward's combination of Maroon and cosmopolitan signifiers activates an inverse of the power dynamics Fabian describes, in which the urban and cosmopolitan characteristics are the ones that are presented more abstractly and in a more timeless fashion.

lens, as I have done here, the act of understanding is predicated on recognition of known elements. Instead of exposing audiences to what they don't know about a dance form or a culture, Eduward shows them the deeply familiar where they may not expect to find it. The practice of recognition, and the enjoyment of recognition, has intrinsic value for the social dynamics that are thereby put into play.

Benny' s Solo

The sequence of male solos that Eduward initiates goes on for several more minutes, with successive dancers occupying the center of the performance space. One of the final soloists in the routine is Benny Fonkel, who likewise choreographed his own narrative. In Benny's performance, the recognition of locally specific cues heightens the comic effect of his performance. In fact, in performing for people who are unfamiliar with village life, this local subtext lends the performance a touch of irony that is only appreciable to cultural insiders. Whereas Eduward's solo emphasizes social commonalities by highlighting the translocal nature of cosmopolitanism, the wit and humor of Benny's solo derives from cultural and geographic specificities. The following is a brief description:

*Benny limps forward from the line of soloists into the center of the performance space. He then bends down and examines the bottom of his foot, picking at something that is buried in the skin. Standing upright once again, he holds his hands in fists above his head with his thumbs touching, and then rotates his hands toward each other, as though bending or breaking something with his thumbs. After repeating the same move a few more times, Benny begins dancing, maintaining a slight limp. His dancing gains in intensity and his limping movements lessen until, in the culminating move, Benny holds the foot on which he had been limping in his opposite hand while jumping through the circular shape thereby created with his standing leg. Having completed the signature move of his short routine, Benny returns to his place in the line of male soloists, resuming his character's limping gait as he does so.*

Initially I took this sequence of events at face value, enjoying it for the clever way that the tender foot, which I assumed had a splinter or some such object in it, transforms from being an (imagined) impediment into a feature of the solo's most impressive stunt. Benny, one of the group's older members, did not perform with the explosive energy that some of the younger soloists could

generate. This short narrative seemed to play to his strengths, creating interest in a way that complimented his more subdued style.

Nearing the end of my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to talk with Benny about this particular solo and the process of creating solos more generally. Benny told me he developed this routine at home, incorporating it into the compilation of solos once it was essentially finished. The 'something' he pretends is lodged in his foot in his solo is not a splinter, but rather a *sika* (also known locally as *chika*), a foot parasite commonly found along Suriname's riverways. He told me he used to pretend to pick lice out of his hair and then squash them, but now that he's shaving his head, this part of the routine no longer makes sense. He said he borrowed the idea for his signature move from a *loketo* performance he saw on a DVD.[251] He also talked about incorporating some Michael Jackson moves from Thriller into his routines, saying, 'Try it and just see how the people will cheer!' Throughout our conversation, he emphasized that awasa is a free dance that accommodates a performer's creativity.

In Benny's explanation of his creative process, the merging of several intersecting themes and influences are striking. Especially considering this solo in light of the one it replaced, we get a sense for Benny's particular brand of humor and the comedic character he aimed to contribute to this collection of solos, complete with a certain 'gross-out' factor. It also becomes clear the many ways in which Benny combines influences from a range of non-Maroon and non-Surinamese sources with elements that are expressly local and particular to the Maroons.

As with Eduward's solo, Benny's performance calls attention to aspects of life that are prone to exclusion from discussions of Maroon daily life, but the markedly different characters of these aspects lead to different social implications. To be sure, Benny acted out a scenario that highlights a decidedly un-glamorous dimension of daily life in many Maroon villages. Sika's, or sand fleas, tend

[251] Loketo is a soukous-derived popular music style of Congolese origin that is widely popular in Suriname. It is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

to be found in the sandy soil of the paths and waterside area in the rainforest interior, burrowing into the skin, most often a person's foot, and in particular in between the toes. Without knowing specifically what is lodged in Benny's character's foot, a lay audience can still follow the general trajectory of this solo with little difficulty. Yet the deeper significance unites a local community by referencing life practices that are culturally intimate.

Michael Herzfeld describes cultural intimacy as, "the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality (Herzfeld 2005, 3)." We might consider Benny's crude method of extraction and extermination of a common parasite a performance of cultural intimacy, uniting as it does those onlookers who have not only experienced the parasite, but can identify with Benny's character's reaction. In contrast, Eduwad's performance certainly does evoke an intimate situation, with the audience acting as interlopers to a man's solitary grooming routine. The actions his character takes are, I find, endearingly self-conscious—the way he leans forward holding his chin, as if to inspect the closeness of his shave or, perhaps most obviously, the way he pauses after spritzing his neck and wrists with cologne, and then gives a quick spritz to his private parts. Through attention to these details, we gain a sense of who this character is. But while this performance is certainly intimate, I do not consider it to be culturally intimate. The part of his performance that registers as the most vulnerable and private is precisely the part of his performance that blurs the social or cultural points of reference.

The culturally intimate scenario that Benny references in his performance draws together in a rather humorous way those individuals who recognize its local references. But for cultural insiders, this humor is magnified when performed for audiences of tourists and cultural outsiders. Performing amidst exotic and romanticized notions of Maroon culture and an insatiable curiosity about the 'strange' features of Maroons' daily lives, Benny depicts one of the most unromantic, uncomfortable

realities imaginable, without these cultural outsiders recognizing the reference. By missing these local references, uninformed audiences inadvertently perform the limits of their understanding, thus strengthening the bonds between those who are 'in the know.'

Before Benny explained the storyline to me, I did not catch the reference, even though I, too, had experienced the parasite in question some months previous. Not only did Benny's performance demonstrate an understanding of what *sikas* do and how it feels to be an unfortunate host to them, it was a demonstration of a culturally situated response as well. I might have missed the reference because I wasn't expecting to find it in the dance solo, or because the way his character of managed this inconvenience was different than my own (I went to a doctor's office in the city), or because one incident of exposure was simply not enough to make the accompanying behaviors immediately recognizable to me.

In addition to its use of local referents, Benny's solo is inspired by a Congolese-derived popular music and dance genre that came to Suriname through a series of transnational circuits. Audiences might therefore recognize in this performance their shared connections to an internationally circulating popular art form, in place of or in combination with local references to sika. The result is a choreography that has more nuanced meanings beyond the immediately accessible, connecting both to local and transnational aspects of lived experience. Much the same would be true in routines that borrow from Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, though I never saw a performance in which Benny borrowed from this distinctive choreography.[252]

In both Benny's and Eduward's solos, the performer's body functions as a semantic pivot point, on the one hand playing upon sensate experiences to which audiences can relate as physical

[252] It is worth noting that Michael Jackson is as much of a pop superstar in Suriname as he is in the States. His music and choreographies have a large and enthusiastic following, and his death in 2009 was deeply mourned by many Surinamers. Much as Benny predicted, during a 2011 performance by the *awasa* group Tangiba, a young dancer incorporated a moonwalk into his solo. In the days to follow, it was this characteristic of the performance that drew the most commentary, praise, and publicity.

beings, and on the other conveying mannerisms and reactions that are learned within a particular social fabric, and through experiences that are linked to specific locations or circumstances. It is through these coexisting facets of bodily experience that both Eduward's and Benny's solos are rendered generally comprehensible to most audiences, yet also saturated with personal and culturally specific nuances. I think these demonstrations of multiple, culturally informed physical fluencies are especially effective in subverting stereotypes because they are embodied demonstrations of competence borne out of practice.

Debora, Cheke, and Nicholas[253]

My third example comes from a separate choreographed routine from Saisa's repertoire. In the winter of 2008, Saisa began workshopping a new move that involved a deep knee bend and gradual rise while bringing the hands to one's head, coordinated with a specific pattern played by the lead drum. This move was difficult for dancers to learn, due to several small departures from their standard practice that, when combined, proved challenging to coordinate. Group members were in the process if learning this move as I left Paramaribo for a month-long trip. Shortly after my return to the city, I attended an event at which they performed a new choreographed piece, based on this move.

In the routine, dancers Nicholas Banjo and "Cheke" (Chekefaria) Pinas enter the dance space as they would for most any other awasa number, with a forward shuffle step called 'waka kon.' Arriving in the center of the performance space, the drummer cues them to begin their soloistic dancing, but both dancers appear confused by the move and look to each other, baffled. Debora—one of Saisa's principal female dancers—steps from the sidelines. Pushing the two men out of her way, she demonstrates how the movement is supposed to go. After watching Debora dance solo for

[253] As of 2011, Cheke and Debora had both left Saisa.

several moments, Nicholas and Cheke join in—enthusiastically performing and embellishing the movement, following Debora's example.

This choreography serves as a convenient and clever way of masking the difficult transition into the solo dance move. The risk of coming in wrong is mitigated by the storyline of the routine. For Cheke and Nicholas, both of whom had struggled with the move initially, mistakes don't matter, so long as they catch on eventually. Only Debora has to get the timing right in order for the choreography to be effective, and she is the dancer who developed the move and introduced it to the group, showing mastery over the requisite timing and coordination from the outset.

Beyond the pragmatic benefits of the choreography, I find the routine's most striking feature is the way it replays the circumstances under which the group first learned this particular movement. As such, it acts as a kind of collective autobiography. All three dancers are essentially playing themselves, dramatizing for an audience the events that had taken place in these early rehearsals. Nicholas and Cheke's confusion is recast as intentional, yet it is unclear if, even in these later performances, they would be able to master the movement's timing and coordination on the first try.

Whereas, in some circumstances, difficulty learning a step might serve to undermine the confidence or credibility of a group or individual, the members of Saisa recast this phenomenon as an entertaining social interaction that ultimately resolves in a successful performance. In a subtle way, this changes the projected location of culture. This scenario did not take place in a village context, performed by people who might more neatly fit the idyllic images of the Maroon cultural practitioner—the 'source' of this text occurred in a fenced in back yard in Ramgoe, a neighborhood on the outskirts of Paramaribo, and was subsequently reproduced in similar back yards, or for audiences as unfamiliar with these evening rehearsals as they are with other, more geographically or temporally distant sources.

Through portraying themselves and their own life stories, group members are able to delineate a cultural frame that they can inhabit more completely. While their choreography is infused with broadly recognizable markers of Maroon performance aesthetics, it is also the product of experiences that are deeply personal and undeniably their own. In this way, Saisa's choreographic strategies prove effective in creating linkages between culture as imagined and culture as lived on a daily basis. Through this choreographed work, performers make lived experiences—ones that might otherwise discredit individuals—into points of interest, complicating an impression of innate ability in the process. They recast the learning process as something that happens within traditional forms, among adults as well as children. Introducing new moves and innovations—and the at times arduous process of learning them—is another part of the tradition.

## Conclusion

All three choreographies presented here have a narrative form that can be understood at multiple registers; each one has a story that is accessible to all, and a deeper narrative to which access is limited. This restricted access is not granted exclusively to those with the deepest knowledge of Maroon culture. It could be available to onlookers who know the individuals involved, who live in certain locations, who have witnessed the group's rehearsal processes—even those who share the same cosmopolitan sensibilities and interests. These choreographies all depict spaces and experiences in individuals' lives that are, in one way or another, considered private—washing and preparing one's coiffure; getting rid of a common parasite, struggling to learn a new dance move. In putting such intimate experiences on a public stage, these routines have the potential to surprise audiences, presenting them with deeply familiar references where they do not expect to find them. Recognition, then, becomes a particularly vibrant site of play, changing the source of entertainment from one based on exposure to geographically, temporally, or culturally distant elements to one that

draws connections on different terms. Not only is the experience of recognition satisfying in itself, for those with access to the various back-stories presented in the routines, witnessing others' partial understandings can affirm a deeper sense of belonging.

These choreographed routines contain a wealth of references to different facets of performers' experiences. Presented amidst a dense musical texture over the span of only a few minutes, each piece contains far more information than a casual spectator is likely to notice. Beyond an audience's reaction, these performances play an affirming role for the roughly twenty active members of Saisa who take part in them as singers, percussionists, and dancers. Aspects of their lives, their affiliations, and the knowledge that they acquire in work and recreation become sources for galvanizing community within and beyond the group. Because Saisa performs as a collective of individuals who have in common many facets of their daily lives and are most likely to be privy to the layered meanings in such choreographies, group members occupy a place of privilege—the greatest ease of access—in a performance's politics of inclusion.

To state outright that these performances are *about* power relations is a viewpoint that I think the various choreographers and performers involved would reject. Yet the open play with stereotypes and audience expectations is a crucial ingredient to the satisfaction these choreographies generate, and those expectations are indeed borne out of a series of unequal power relations. Accordingly, while I do not consider any of these choreographies as existing in opposition to a specific organization or person, I consider the dancers as engaged in a play of oppositions that nonetheless has political resonance.

Through these choreographed works, Saisa performers presented stories that engaged actively with the multiple influences and cosmopolitan features in their lives, thereby asserting that these features (and by extension the urban Maroon sensibilities they reference) *do* have a place on a cultural stage. On a more fundamental level, they embody and enact aspects of their social position,

offering up alternative social and cultural images to performers and audiences. Performing from a space of alleged contradiction, in the presumably shallower cultural waters of urban residence and suburban-village homeland, these dancers generate interest through the depth of their semantic play.

# Chapter 5: Fiamba

"Gaansama de vanouwdu, ma…ifu I wani do nyun sani, da I a man do en nanga gaansama. Da I abi fu wroko nanga yonku sama."

"[The performance traditions of one's] elders are important but…if you want to do new things, you can't do it with older people. Then, you have to work with young people."

-Alexander Tolin, Art Director, Ministry of Culture of Suriname

Fiamba song, "U N'á Gaanwan", as sung by Jemi Sikanar

O ye yee u naa gaanwan, fa u wawan fika ja u n'a gaanwan
Ooo yee, u n'a gaanwan, fa u wawan fika ja u n'a gaanwan.
O yee yee u naa gaanwan, Fiamba uman fika ja u de sondee gaanwan
Ooo yee, u n'aa gaanwan, fa u wawan fika ja u n'a gaanwan

Lead: O ye yee, we don't have elders, how we're left alone here, we don't have elders
Koor: Ooo yee we don't have elders, how we're left alone here, we don't have elders
Lead: O ye yee, we don't have elders, Fiamba women are left here, we're without elders
Koor: Ooo yee we don't have elders, how we're left alone here, we don't have elders

The group Fiamba is named after a small bird that is native to the rainforest, known for making particularly large and extravagant nests. Group founder Louise Wondel explained the meaning behind the name as, "Mi sikin nyoni ma mi sa do bigi"—I may be little, but I can do big things. For a group that has been propelled by young people since its inception, with past members who have gone on to become figureheads for their generation in fields including song, dance, poetry, and theatre, the name certainly seems to fit.[254]

[254] Kenneth Bilby has noted that a mild insult he heard during his fieldwork involved comparing a woman's skinny legs to that of the fiamba.

I put forth three main points in this chapter. First, I suggest that the limited age range and specifically youth-oriented character of this group resulted in distinctive pedagogical and performance practices. My second point draws upon the ways in which Fiamba members were deeply involved in the creative combination, recombination, and interpretation of traditional and "popular" elements of performance. In some instances, Fiamba helped to popularize traditional performance elements, while in other routines the group traditionalized popular forms, taking the latest trends in national and international music and dance and reframing them as part of a Maroon or more broadly Afro-Atlantic birthright. Whereas, in the previous chapter, I considered Saisa's combinatorial processes through performed narrative, here I focus on a group's practices of quotation and adaptation of preexisting performance material from diverse sources.

In the final section of this chapter I describe the group's culminating event during 2008-2009, an annual parade that takes a different route through the streets of Paramaribo on each of four consecutive evenings. Through recounting aspects of the preparation for and participation in this parade, I aim to draw attention to the ways in which meaning is formulated through the nested significations of group, subgroup, and event. While the Wandelmars parade could be considered an event that facilitates the display of (ethnicity-based) traditional performance, it could be interpreted just as easily as a situation in which group members' involvement in traditional performance afforded them a particular kind of participatory role in city culture.

## Fiamba Founder, Louise Wondel

Although her performance career has been cut short due to illness, Louise Wondel's young adult years as a performer and cultural activist have made a lasting impression on the Maroon population in Paramaribo and beyond. A strong willed, multi-talented young woman, Louise was

active in a wide array of performance activities. She achieved renown as a dancer, making her mark through her participation in several performance groups (initially Kifangu and Maswa, then later her own group, Fiamba), and also as the winner of several dance and talent contests that took place within the city.

In addition to her widely recognized talent as a dancer, Louise was also known for her eloquence. Several of her poems, which were most often performed in the Okanisi language and were imbued with messages relating to Maroon culture and lifestyle, were recorded and sold commercially on audiocassette. Extending her knowledge base beyond the performance realm, Louise completed a Bachelor's degree in Sociology at Anton DeKom University in Paramaribo, writing her final report on the dance styles of the Aukaners (Wondel 1995).

After graduating from school, Louise moved to Holland, where she helped extend Fiamba's network, organizing the group's European debut and subsequent visits. At this point, just as her career was gathering momentum, Louise became ill, forcing her to discontinue her involvement in Fiamba and curtailing her individual performance efforts.

Leadership of Fiamba was transferred to Alexander Tolin before being passed on to Louise's nephew, Clifton Asongo, who had been a member of the organization since 1998.[255] Clifton worked his way up the group's musical ranks, starting out playing the rattles (saka's), then progressing to playing *tun,* and still later the more advanced *pikin doon* and *gaan doon* drumming parts. Clifton enjoyed the group for its own merits, but he took on the role of group leader in part to keep alive his aunt's legacy. Most Friday evenings, Louise could be seen sitting on the back porch of her family's house, often with the company of her sister or with visitors, observing Fiamba's rehearsal from a distance.

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[255] Clifton assumed leadership of Fiamba in 2002.

Founding

Fiamba was founded in January 1995, as a small group of less than ten members, drawing heavily from members of Louise's family. Over time, the group expanded and gained popularity, its dual trips to Holland helping to establish itself both within Suriname and abroad.[256]

In 1996, at the conclusion of Fiamba's first year in existence, the group's three officers (Louise Wondel, president; Erwin Tolin Alexander, treasurer, and Wensley Misiedjan, secretary) drafted a list of statutes, outlining how they envisioned the group would operate in future years. This lists consists of 20 articles, written in Dutch, covering topics ranging from the overall purpose of the group to the roles and election of its officers. As was the case with Kifoko, these initial plans outline a structure that proved far more regulated than was the group's actual operation in the years to follow

A notable aspect of the statutes is their emphasis on creating a yearly plan. This structure was to be punctuated at designated points by scheduled meetings of association officers, the election of officers, the process of setting goals at the outset of each calendar year, and the evaluation of their success at the year's end. Although Fiamba's years are not marked by the particular sets of meetings and events outlined in the statutes, the passage of time is marked by breaks that coincide with school vacations and exam periods, as well as the group's major performances, including an annual performance for the Peace Corps' new volunteer orientation and the Wandelmars (or Avond Vierdagse) parade, held annually in late March or early April.

As it operated during the term of my fieldwork, Fiamba's organization did not demonstrate a familiarity with or adherence to the statutes. There were no group officers, with Clifton acting as president, secretary, and treasurer. Occasionally, various tasks were delegated to group members, or

[256] Both trips to Holland were to perform in the World Childrens' Festival (Wereld Kinder Festival). The second visit, in 2001 resulted in a CD release, pairing Fiamba's musical performance with the Ghana Junior All-Stars. The group performed under the name, Pikin fu Fiamba.

members would volunteer to take on additional responsibilities, such as coordinating travel arrangements for a particular event, or offering help with publicity or recruitment efforts, yet these extra tasks and responsibilities were generally based on short-term goals. Here again, it is useful to consider that the group's membership consists of young people, the vast majority of whom have rapidly fluctuating schedules; the term of their regular involvement may be as limited as one or a couple years.

Setting/Venue

Fiamba rehearsals took place in front of the house where both Clifton and Louise lived in a neighborhood on the outskirts of Paramaribo named Hanna's Lust. The house was located on Samboerastraat, a street that functioned as one of the primary arteries leading from the neighborhood to Indiraghadniweg, the main route to downtown Paramaribo. A steady stream of local traffic, both pedestrian and automotive, provided a consistent sonic backdrop.

The house where Clifton and Louise lived with their family was easily distinguishable from other houses in Hanna's Lust. Along the roadside, at the mouth of the driveway leading up to the house, a number of hand-painted signs advertise traditional Maroon foodstuffs and handicrafts for purchase, including cassava bread, *pemba* clay, used for a variety of rituals, and *kwak*—grated, toasted cassava, a staple of a typical Maroon diet. Just as I was leaving Suriname in 2009, Fiamba was getting ready to move rehearsals from a paved area visible from the house to a new portion of the front yard that had recently been paved. The space was slightly smaller, closer to the road, and perhaps most importantly, lit by floodlights.

One of the most remarkable features of the space was that it was a social hub for young people in the area. The long driveway leading to the house was lined with brightly painted homemade wooden benches and tables. Fiamba members and also local teenagers would

congregate in these nooks, chatting with one another, joking, and flirting. This was not only the case on Friday evenings, when the group rehearsed—I encountered clusters of young people congregated there on many of the other afternoons when I visited the house, when no rehearsal or other Fiamba-related event was scheduled.

From their quasi-anonymous driveway vantage point, young people were free to exercise passive or active interest in Fiamba as the group rehearsed, but in general, among the bystanders there was respect for and interest in the performance goals that brought members to the space.

Membership

Although Fiamba was loosely associated with Hanna's Lust, the neighborhood in which Clifton and Louise lived, members' ties to specific locations—whether city neighborhoods or villages further inland—were not as evident or commonly shared in Fiamba's membership as they were in either Saisa or Kifoko. The group's membership included young people dispersed throughout a variety of neighborhoods within Paramaribo and outlying suburbs. The majority of Fiamba's members got involved with the group through word-of mouth (generally through friends, family, and peers), or through publicity generated by Wandelmars or other performances.

Fiamba rehearsals took place on Friday evenings. The official start time was six o'clock, but members started trickling in around 6:15, and rehearsals often got underway as late as 7:00, as dusk was falling. Male members had a tendency to arrive earlier than the female members, and in the last two or three months of my fieldwork, this trend became more noticeable. While the female group members were often chastised for their tardiness, it was also clear that the drummers valued the chance to practice together before the rehearsal was fully in progress.

Male members would dance in performance, but they seldom did so during a rehearsal. When they did, it tended to be either at the very beginning or the conclusion of a rehearsal, after the

lines of dancers had dispersed. In contrast to the coordinated routines created and rehearsed by the group's female members, young men danced solo or in dialogue with another performer—either male or female. They maintained a highly improvisatory style.[257]

Norma Sante

Fiamba has played host to a number of rising talents. In addition to Louise Wondel, Erwin Tolin Alexander had, by the late 2000's, asserted himself as an important personality in the nation's cultural affairs as a member of Suriname's Ministry of Culture. Likewise, Alexander had established himself as a talented playwright—he had put on major productions within Suriname and had undergone considerable training in the Netherlands. The newest rising star to emerge was Norma Sante. Sante had achieved local and regional fame as a lead singer for NAKS Kaseko Loco, a widely popular *kaskawi* ensemble.[258] A Ndyuka herself, Sante sings in the Okanisi language, incorporating *loli*—a distinctive vibrato characteristic of Ndyuka and Eastern Maroon song style—but the band and the genre they perform are ethnically heterogeneous. *Kaskawi* grew out of the fusion of Creole, Maroon, Amerindian, and Western musical influences, and Norma's (all-male) bandmates are predominantly Creole. Since 2009, Norma has developed her solo career. She released her first solo album, "Lonka" in 2011, and has begun giving solo concerts, while maintaining her busy concert schedule as a member of NAKS Kaseko Loco.[259] Her popularity is propelled by her distinctive voice, her dynamic stage presence, and her fierce dance moves.

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[257] Although Kifoko's male members did dance more frequently than their Fiamba counterparts, both in rehearsal and performance, both groups tended to align similarly in terms of the women performing more choreographed routines and the men taking a more improvised role.

[258] *Kaskawi* combines the rhythmic characteristics and instrumentation of *kaseko* and *kawina*, two popular music genres that arose in the early 20th century, through a fusion of Creole, Maroon, and Arawak Indian musical styles. For more information, see the "kawina" and "kaseko" entries in Campbell, 2012.

[259] Sante's breakout CD, titled "U De Nen Kaba" (2009), was not technically a solo CD, but rather a compilation of songs that she performs with NAKS Kaseko Loco.

Repertoire

Fiamba's past and present leaders have all been from the Ndyuka subgroup and, as with the other groups, the Ndyuka genre *awasa* is a central element in their performances. Yet between the Saramakan *bandammba*, the Ndyuka-based popular form *aleke*, and the Congolese-derived popular dance and music genre *loketo*, Fiamba's standard repertoire casts a particularly wide net. Their performances included references to the latest trends and local 'hits' from the vibrant popular music circuit.[260]

Alongside the many original compositions and contemporary songs and dances in Fiamba's repertoire, the group performed its share of canonical songs, including *awasa* songs 'Sa Asenowe' and 'Labaa labaa labaa,'[261] discussed in Chapter 6. Sometimes, however, the calls to these 'standards' were restricted, exhibiting a narrower range of melodic and textual variation than was generally the case among the veteran singers in Kifoko or Saisa. During 2008-2009, Fiamba had one lead singer, Faizel Pinas, with other members who knew the song lyrics sufficiently well to perform them in Faizel's absence.[262]

Fiamba's inclusion of popular genres *aleke* and *loketo* highlighted their position at the interstices of popular and traditional performance trends. As the youngest genres in their repertoire and the only ones that were exclusive to the group, these two genres—and Fiamba's interpretations and adaptations of them—warrant further discussion.

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[260]Elements that characterize what I call the consumption of popular music include staged evening performances, radio airtime, and circulation by means of CD's or digital files, billed and presented alongside other nationally and internationally recognized popular music genres, including kaseko and reggae music.

[261] "Labaa Labaa Labaa" is generally performed as the abridged chorus, following "Kon Diingi Labaa," also discussed in Chapter 6. Fiamba performed it as a stand-alone song.

[262] Sheryl Tesa introduced two *bandammba* songs to the group, which she would sing at nearly every performance. Faizel left Fiamba in 2010, forcing other members to take a more active role in singing.

*Aleke*

*Aleke* is, by and large, a recreational music, although it is also incorporated into funerary rites and other ceremonial occasions. The genre emerged in the 1950s and early 1960s in the Cottica region, the northernmost of the Ndjuka territories. During this period, a boom in gold mining brought local Ndjuka Maroons into increased and sustained contact with Suriname's Creole population. As a result, local musical styles were put in dialogue with genres that were popular in Paramaribo, including *winti* music, *kaseko*, *kawina*, and *bigi poku*.[263]

*Aleke* features three large, cylindrical drums, called *aleke* drums (*aleke doon*), which were developed in the 1970s (Bilby 2001, 33); before that time the music was played on the standard drums used for *awasa*, known by the Ndjuka as *doon* and popularly referred to as *apinti* drums (*apinti doon*). The other drum particular to *aleke* is the *dyas* (from the word, 'jazz'), a bass drum that is played in combination with a hi-hat, modeled after a Western drum set. The instrumental ensemble is completed with shakers (*saka*) and occasionally a bell (*bongo*).[264] In concert, a band's lead singers garner most of an audience's attention, however the drumming patterns are crucial in distinguishing a group's signature style, punctuating the texture with dynamic breaks and transitions, and establishing a rhythmic feel suitable for dancing.

In the late 2000's, the most popular *aleke* bands featured multiple singers who alternated between performing the lead part and, during other singers' songs, a harmonized chorus. Singing

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[263] For a more detailed discussion of aleke's history, stylistic attributes, and the ways in which the genre has been used as a powerful resource in identity formation, see Bilby (2001) and Pakosie (1999).

[264] The members of the *aleke* band, Fondering referred to this iron bell as a *bongo*, however Pakosie states its name is *dawolon*. Likewise, I heard most people refer to the *dyas* as the bass drum when played *together with* the hi-hat, while Pakosie reports that the hi-hat as having a different name—what his informant Sawini Mac-Donald calls *akamitikifutu* (Pakosie 1999, 12).

styles varied widely, from a largely pentatonic tonal palette and a traditional style of trill/vibrato known as *loli*, to diatonic songs that conveyed a broader range of musical influences.

For the members of Fiamba, performing *aleke* with *awasa* instrumentation was not very much of a conceptual stretch. *Aleke,* too, has a core ensemble of three drums, which are similar to the *tun*, *pikin doon*, and *gaan doon* parts in an *awasa* ensemble both in pitch relation and in performance function.[265] Fiamba performed with a percussive wooden bench called a *kwakwabangi*[266] and without the *dyas* or *bongo*, but the style of playing remained easy to identify, even with these changes. Although Fiamba was the only 'cultural group' in Paramaribo to include *aleke* as part of their standard repertoire in 2008-2009, others, including Kifoko, had set a precedent by including *aleke* in their repertoire in the past.[267] Many of the members of Fiamba kept up to date on the latest songs and rhythms produced by *aleke* bands, including Masanga 2000, A Seke Doti, and Fondering, as avid fans. Incorporating *loketo* into their repertoire proved much more of a challenge.

*Loketo*

A clear-cut definition of *loketo* is difficult to generate. Fans of Congolese *soukous* music might recognize that the genre shares a name with a popular *soukous* band from the 1980's, headlined by singer Aurlus Mabélé and guitar virtuoso Diblo Dibala. In fact, according to Kenneth Bilby, it was this band's 1989 tour to French Guyana that sparked local *kaseko* and *kawina* musicians' interests. When the band, complete with dancers, performed in Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni, a small town on the

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[265] While I think there are many convincing structural similarities between *awasa* and a*leke* music, *awasa* is not generally considered among *aleke*'s closest musical relatives. The genres *melenge, maselo, loonsei*, and *lama* are all considered stronger influences in the development of aleke. For information on these genres, see Pakosie 1999, 6.

[266] Interestingly, Louise Wondel lists *atoonpai* as an alternate name for *kwakwabangi* (Wondel 1995, 8). The name '*atoonpai*' is more commonly understood to refer to the timekeeping rhythm played by the *tun* drum in the dance genre, *songe.* (Bilby, personal communication.)

[267] Under the guidance of their founder, André Mosis, Kifoko had performed *aleke* in its early years. The drum stands that the group continued to use in performance were inspired by the taller *aleke* drums.

French Guyana/Suriname border, they played to a packed and wildly enthusiastic crowd. Maroons in the audience were not only taken with the distinctive musical texture, but also with the dance style that accompanied it, with its fluid hip rolls and plenty of opportunities for playful interaction and innuendo.

Loketo's performance inspired a number of local *kaseko* and *kawina* musicians to adapt and experiment with the style. Eventually, this led to the formation of the genre *loketo*, which was locally realized despite being conceived of as a cultural import from Central Africa. Bilby explains:

> Within months [of the band Loketo's concert in St. Laurent], kaseko and kawina recordings began to appear in Paramaribo with song titles and texts referring to "Loketo," along with a new soukous-inspired dance style. More and more Ndjuka Maroon kaseko bands tried to reproduce the Central African sound, and the name *loketo* was eventually applied as a generic label to the resulting kaseko-soukous fusions. Most of the younger Maroon kaseko musicians who play loketo today are unaware that the name by which this kaseko substyle is now known is derived from the well-known Central African soukous band mentioned above; they see it simply as the original "African name" for the soukous genre that has influenced their music. (Bilby 1999, 289).

Through my interactions with musicians and music enthusiasts some ten years after Bilby's article was published, it was clear to me that, indeed, most people in their teens through early thirties had an imprecise understanding of the history of the genre. Most people described the genre as being African or coming from Africa, but could offer few details. Although some people noted that the music style came to Suriname through French Guyana, nobody I talked to mentioned the band Loketo as the source of the genre, nor the 1989 concert that is said to have made such an impact. By the late 2000's, I found few musicians who performed the music live. Instead, many recording studios had developed synthesized *loketo* beats, over which a singer could practice or record.[268]

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[268] This trend of producing backup tracks, both for individual musicians and for the general public, spanned most popular music genres. While most of these were synthesized, aleke bands, too, created generic backing tracks for aspiring singers. It was not unusual for bands to include one or two such tracks at the end of their CD's for this kind of general use. One factor that is a plausible contributor to the digitization of *loketo* in particular is that there were far more singers and aspiring singers than there were guitarists capable of executing the extended melodies that were a major characteristic of the *loketo* sound, which were played extremely fast.

*Loketo* dancing, however, remained a popular source of live entertainment. In addition to individual performances of *loketo* moves at local concerts (sometimes incorporating these moves into their dancing to other styles, or to recorded tracks), a number of formalized *loketo* dance groups had sprouted up throughout the region. These groups performed painstakingly choreographed dance moves, accompanied by prerecorded music mixes.[269] As with local street dancing crews,[270] the *loketo* groups utilized the dramatic, studio-engineered breaks and transitions between segments of a mixed track as inspiration for their choreographies.

In contrast to *aleke*, which required relatively little adaptation for Fiamba members, *loketo* presented many challenges. Fiamba's performance of this genre differed significantly both in relation to the *loketo* audio and video recordings that circulated within Suriname, and as it was performed by other Surinamese dance groups that focused on this genre exclusively. The imported music that was locally classified as *loketo*—including such artists as Dr. Sakis, Diblo Dibala, Aurlus Mabélé—featured extended instrumental melodies, with the amplified sounds of multiple electric guitars playing an especially prominent role in the musical mix. Surinamese *kaseko* bands had pared down the multiple guitar parts to a single instrument, while the percussion-based *kawina* bands that experimented with the genre sped up their tempo, providing a denser musical texture. Fiamba's performance of *loketo* involved a fast tempo, using the signature *aleke* rhythm as their musical basis.[271]

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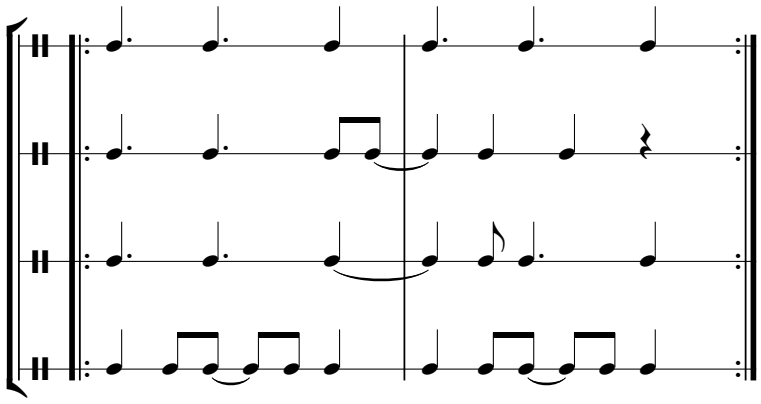
[269] I encountered groups of exlusively women or girls performing together, mixed gender groups, and less often a group of exclusively young men or boys. The movement styles of the dance are highly gendered, making the gender profile of one group versus another a distinguishing feature in their overall performance character.

[270] Street dancing groups, some of which identified as hip-hop groups, were popular among young men in Paramaribo. The most well known group during the late 2000's was Mystikal, which had members from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

[271] This statement is based off Kenneth Bilby's description of loketo in (Bilby 1999, 289), as well as on personal correspondence with Bilby on this topic. (04/24/12.)

**Figure 8.** *Loketo* Rhythms Compared with Aleke Rhythms



The upper three lines are variants on common *loketo* rhythms, most commonly played by the snare in a drum set. The bottom most line is *aleke*'s signature rhythm.

Like many of the Maroon genres Fiamba performed, *loketo* music makes use of call and response singing, but unlike the continuous call and response typically utilized in genres including *aleke* and *awasa*, *loketo* tracks generally included a break between lyrical phrases, whenever a singer would switch from one phrase to the next. Some of the most iconic gestures of the dance were tied to specific features of the instrumental grooves and melodic content of the songs. Without melodic instruments within the ensemble, and with the differences in song structure, Fiamba's musical rendition of *loketo* was missing two dominant characteristics of the genre.

Finding ways of differentiating the movements and the performance features from those performed in *aleke*, amidst a musical texture that was strikingly similar, was a constant challenge. With the musical material functioning as, essentially, a sped-up version of *aleke*, the dancing, too, tended to bear *aleke*'s kinesthetic signature. In 2008-2009, and likewise on a follow-up research visit in 2011, the group engaged in multiple discussions concerning how they could create a stronger likeness to *loketo* as popularly performed. In confronting this puzzle, dancers were generally the

focus of attention. With the encouragement of Clifton and the drummers, dancers experimented with new moves, none of which seemed to stick. All the while, the dancers commented on how the moves didn't seem to fit with the music quite right. I had to agree—many of the musical characteristics that I had come to understand as characteristic of *loketo* were missing. The alternation of multiple distinctive rhythmic grooves and repeated verses, the ensemble's timbral variety and multiple melodic lines, the lead singer's use of syncopated words or sounds in between a song's main lyrics to create anticipation and more extended musical ideas—all of these features fed into dancers' physical stylizations and overall musicality. They were raw material for dancers' interpretation and elaboration. In and of themselves, the rhythmic structures of these two dance genres do have many similarities. This emphasizes a point of which African music scholars have needed perpetual reminding[272]—looking beyond an ensemble's basic rhythmic structure and the percussion instruments is, with few exceptions, imperative to understanding what is really going on in a performance.

Coincidentally, while group members experienced some difficulty in creating *loketo* performances that looked and sounded like *loketo*, the dance's characteristic moves had crept into their performance of the genre, *bandammba*. One of the main characteristics of the *bandammba* style is that the dancer—typically a female—demonstrates a series of rolls and rhythmic hip jerks (short, articulated movements, generally on a horizontal plane), while keeping the rest of the body relatively still. Some of Fiamba's dancers had chosen to incorporate into their *bandammba* solos movements that are common to *loketo* dancing. These included freer movement of the legs, as well as several 'stunt moves' that feature rapid hip shakes that were often performed while bending forward or while resting one's forearms on the ground. Fellow group members pointed out that these young

[272] Kofi Agawu has effectively problematized the Euro-American fixation and sensationalization of African rhythm, suggesting that there are serious political implications that undergird this general trend. See especially Chapters 2 and 3 in Agawu 2003.

women were mixing styles, yet it did not change their performance practice. By and large, audiences did not seem to mind. On the contrary, these moves tended to draw enthusiastic cheers and applause.

MIXING GENRES/Genre ambiguity/Feedback

Genre mixing is certainly nothing new for Maroon musicians and dancers. This is clear enough based on the number of fusion genres that proliforate in the music scene—to name a few, kaskawi (a mixture of *kaseko* and *kawina*), *alekas* (*aleke* and *kaseko*), *obia poku* (*kumanti* and other spiritual songs and rhythms, combined with a variety of popular music styles), and *loketo*, discussed above. Further, genre melding was evident in individuals' semiotic play as performers. To give two examples, a Maroon man from French Guyana performed at local events as the 'Awasafarian,' dancing *awasa* while sporting waist-length dreds, marijuana leaf prints and a rasta-colored *kamisa* (loincloth). The photograph below shows a similar overlay of cultural signifiers.

Ethnomusicologist Kenneth Bilby took this photograph on a visit to French Guyana in 2008. He describes it thus:

> [The photo is] from a stage show in Cayenne […during] a performance by an aleke-based Aluku association called Wan Ton Melody. A young lead singer dresses the part of a possessed obiaman (with pemba doti [white clay] coating his face) (as clear a reference to profound Aluku "tradition" identified with tapu sei [Maroon territory in the rainforest] as one could imagine); he's flanked by a chorus consisting of two dreadlocked Rastas (a clear reference to diasporic cosmopolitanism). All of them wear "traditional" Aluku clothing that they would never wear in their normal daily lives (and didn't wear while growing up and going to French schools on the coast). They sing a thoroughly "modern" aleke song. And (though it can't be seen in the photo), the area below the stage is swarmed by a large crowd of mostly adolescent Aluku girls & young women screaming and shouting out encouragements (reminsicent of Beatlemania and comparable phenomena in a rock context). Talk about thick signage![273]

[273] Personal communication (1/21/12).

**Figure 9:** *Aleke* band Wan Ton Melody

Cayenne, French Guyana, 2008. Photo by Kenneth Bilby.

Even as performers draw inspiration from music and dance from other parts of the world (as they have done with *loketo*, reggae, and soul music),[274] Maroon cultural symbolism—in sound, image, and movement—is considered a valuable resource in forging socially and culturally affirming, commercially viable, expressions of modernity. Kenneth Bilby has provided insightful commentary and analysis of how popular musicians have produced distinctly Maroon styles of reggae and the Surinamese genre, *kaseko* (Bilby 1999, 262-3, 2000, 286 n.9). Rivke Jaffe and Jolien Sanderse argue that the inclusion of Maroon cultural referents in reggae and dancehall music are an effective tool in promoting a positive self-image among Maroon men, while counteracting prevailing negative stereotypes.

[274] US-based soul music is tremendously popular in Suriname, effectively drawing fans from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. This genre has a dominant presence in two widely popular national singing competitions—the Suripop Songwriting Competition and Youth Voice. See Campbell 2012 for more on Suripop and how the competition laid the foundation for what is now considered a stand-alone genre.

While this kind of combinatorial play and cross-referencing is somewhat of a cultural mainstay,[275] I believe that paying attention to the material performers combine, and the manner of combination, adds nuance and specificity to this general phenomenon. This makes clear the variety of social 'work' for which such genre mixing can be used, and the very different messages that different choices of material within those genres would generate. In turn, attention to specificity highlights trends and expressive imperatives that are particular to a given point in time. [276]

In 2008-2009, one emerging trend in cross-genre borrowing among popular bands was to include a brief interlude in a contrasting style.[277] Most often these interludes referenced genres that local listeners could easily identify as belonging to a Maroon traditional idiom. The *kawina* band Wi Sani created several local hits that incorporated a *bandammba* feel. Their associations with this Saramakan genre were further established through the group's involvement in the 2009 Bandammba Contest as the backup musicians for the dance contestants.[278]

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[275] Richard and Sally Price have noted what I consider to be comparable play with material and images from a variety of sources in the realm of the visual arts in their 1999 book, *Maroon Arts*. Examples in carving include a wooden pith helmet and sewing machine, (p. 141), and a variety of goods for the tourist market, including a carved attaché case and a wooden umbrella (180, 172). The cultivation of a personalized style of dress, and the ever-changing trends in *pangi* skirt fashions and cape designs likewise signify multiply and borrow from numerous sources.

[276] In the previous chapter, Eduward and Benny's wide range of references in their solos could be seen as fitting into this general trend. In that case, too, I was arguing that recognition, in particular, used the combination of references in a way that had a fresh perspective and a particular function in relation to social politics.

[277] In addition to the musical interludes that I discuss in the section to follow, another such musical trend during my fieldwork term involved the way in which a singer would begin a song. I witnessed singers (performing in a variety of genres) play a couple seconds of the beginning of a song, and then stop abruptly, shouting, "Puuuulo!" before beginning the song anew. A crowd would cheer as a band began to play one of their hits; by stopping the song and then resuming from the beginning, bands could prolong the audience's excitement and generate anticipation, alerting audience members to what was coming next. This is a practice that Surinamese musicians borrowed from Jamaican dancehall singers.

[278] Contest director Freddie Huur listed among the contestants' requisite skills the ability to distinguish between kawina movements and bandammba movements, a task made more challenging by the dual character of the event's musical accompaniment.

In their the *aleke* band A Seke Doti utilized a similar genre shift in their popular song, "A Beni Ja,"[279] breaking away from the *aleke* music of the body of a song to go briefly into a distinctly *awasa*-based percussive texture, introduced alongside two well-known *awasa* songs.[280] The group signals the change in genre by singing in unison, "Da w'e peemi aleke, da wi gwaini awasa" (We play *aleke*, then we go into *awasa*). Through this kind of cross-genre reference, bands create an opportunity for audience members to sport their dance skills in other genres before the dominant genre identification of the group is reestablished.

This trend was not limited to Maroon pop music bands, however. I had witnessed the HEM Rhythm Masters Brass Band practice a similar kind of cross-genre borrowing during a performance at local Maroon woman's birthday party in 2009. Starting out with a piece from their standard repertoire, the group then switched into their own version of *awasa*, featuring their drum line, and then concluding with the ubiquitous 'Happy Birthday' tune, performed in the US and worldwide.[281]

As with the HEM Rhythm Masters, Fiamba made frequent use of such combinatorial techniques. In one of the group's standard routines, singers' call and response phrases created a continuous texture, while the percussion and dance alternated fluidly between *aleke*, *awasa*, and

[279] Track 7 of their 2007 release. CD title unknown.

[280] Yeyeyeye baa and the abridged chorus of labaa mofu'ee labaa, discussed in Chapter 6. This is a particularly long track, lasting just under 9 minutes. Two features of the song text make the genre shift, which occurs 6 ½ minutes in, compliment the song as a whole. First, the lead singer makes specific mention of the genre aleke at several points leading up to the switch. Second, the lead singer calls the names of two prominent aleke bands from the previous generation—Bigi Ting and Tjotjo Pokina—which are both likened to father figures. He comments that A Seke Doti, too, will look to the generation of musicians to follow. Thus, the song is concerned with enduring music and dance traditions, of which *awasa* is certainly one.

[281] I found the most impressive part of this performance was when one of the group's snare players successfully performed the already-taxing and virtuosic moves of the male style of dance (*mannengeefutu*) while harnessed to his drum. As with A Seke Doti, the HEM Rhythm Masters signaled this musical transition with a sung chorus that mentioned *awasa* specifically. This particular performance took place on November 14, 2009 in the neighborhood of Kersvligt. See Video Track 5 on Supplementary Materials.

*bandammba* genres.[282] In another song, titled "Dodo yee," dancers and drummers performed first in an *awasa* style, then transitioning to *bandammba* rhythms and dance moves. That Fiamba utilized such combinatorial strategies to a greater extent than either Kifoko or Saisa is unsurprising, especially given that Fiamba's founder, Louise Wondel, was credited as one of the major innovaters in this style of cross-genre play. In particular, Wondel was known for performing the articulated hip movements of *bandammba* as part of her *aleke* dancing. As a widely popular dancer in Suriname, Wondel performed regularly from the 1990's through the beginning of the 2000's, touring both nationally and internationally.[283]

What I am suggesting is that Fiamba made use of a specific presentational mode that registered as innovative, part of a more widespread trend that was taking place during the late 2000's. These were transferrable skills that linked group members to the most popular Maroon bands, giving them an opportunity to experiment with a kind of cross-genre play that would serve them well when participating in local nightlife. Fiamba members' training in multiple genres increased their ability to take advantage of this popular technique, while further enforcing the point that tradition can be commercially viable and relevant to contemporary self-expression.[284]

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[282] The song that accompanied this performance was, 'Bala Almighty Gadu' [Call Almightiy God] response: 'W'o pee ja' [We'll play here]. Clifton explained, "That means before we go play we are thanking God, because it's Him who gives [us] the ability [or the energy] and the knowledge. We don't start with this piece in the very beginning, because we start out with *awasa*. [This piece is a mixture of different genres, but keeps returning to an *aleke* rhythm.]" Later in the conversation, he specified that by Almighty God, the group was referring to the Christian God. (Personal communication, 05/09/12. )

[283] Wondel may not have been the first to combine these genres in such a way—there is no way to support such a claim—but as one of the most widely known dancers in Suriname, her performance practices were particularly influential. Some of the other ways in which her performances stood out included dancing while standing on her head and playing the drums—both of which were gendered as male. These did not catch on, as did the *bandammba* references in *aleke*.

[284] In Chapter 3, I suggested that maintaining a sense of enduring, 'timeless' tradition requires constant adaptation and recalibration, in order to escape performance styles that reflect the social ideals and aesthetic tastes of a specific point in the past. This could be a useful case study to pursue in the upcoming decades- will the kinds of genre melding that was so prevalent during the term of my research carry associations with this particular moment in performance practice, will they become standard practice or become a basis upon which other innovations are made?

PEDAGOGY AND DIALOGUE

One of Fiamba's most distinctive characteristics was the active exchange of ideas and information between the group's members. There are many factors that contributed to this group's particularly dynamic atmosphere. Many Maroons move from the interior to the city as children or young adults in pursuit of work and education opportunities. Fiamba's 2008-2009 membership included a handful of Maroons who had taken up residence in Paramaribo only recently. Among them was Errol van Dijk, the group's lead drummer. Errol hailed from Diitabiki, the residence of Gaanman Gazon, leader of the Ndyuka subgroup. This talented young drummer grew up within earshot of the foremost *apinti* drummers of the Ndyuka population, and was likewise well versed in the stylistic differences of the major *aleke* bands that were active at the time. While Errol's training was in many ways atypical, other members had likewise learnt genres including *awasa* and *bandammba* in situ, and/or through immersion, and/or under the guidance of knowledgeable practitioners.

Several of the male members, in particular, traveled between the city and the interior or other locations along the coast for work. This both contributed to the stylistic richness of the group and was a perpetual obstacle—through their travels, these group members could relay the very latest musical trends happening outside of the city, yet by the same token, many of them ceased to be involved with the group because of work demands or relocation. Thus, due to people who had learned in the interior from elders, as well as individuals who kept a finger on the pulse of musical innovations taking place in Paramaribo and well beyond, Fiamba provided members with a particularly dynamic learning environment.

Of those members who did live in the city, many came from families in which Maroon performance arts were valued and nurtured. I learned that "Man" Pinas was the youngest son Da Abani, a well-respected healer, only after going to Abani's house for an interview. As the conversation turned to a discussion of Maroon performance traditions, he called for his son to join

us so he, too, could learn. The first time I had a conversation with Fiamba drummer Mano (introduced in Chapter 2), he informed me that his father was a talented drummer who taught him everything he knew. Likewise, dancers Sandrine Akombe and Sheryl Tesa discussed learning from their mothers and other female relatives, and also recounted how their various siblings were active and talented performers of various Maroon performance genres. Many Fiamba members demonstrated a pride and confidence in their individual talents and potential, and what they had learned outside of a group context. Furthermore, the members I have cited here all projected a firm confidence in the skills and knowledge of their teachers.

Founder Louise Wondel noted this kind of communal learning as an important component of what Fiamba offered its members:

> LW: In Fiamba I learned a good deal also. Because, sometimes you have to work with other people. You have other people, you'll get other behaviors. Then you get other…changes also.
>
> CC: Mmhm. Everyone carries their own learning, their own talents.
>
> LW: Mmhm. Yah.[285]

So, while no elders oversaw Fiamba's rehearsals or performances, neither were they (necessarily) very far away. Group members may not have been involved in organized research efforts, as had been the members of Kifoko, but many of them had easy access to information, whether through the elders in their households in the city or by virtue of regular contact with those in the interior. The absence of a single, stable authority figure on cultural matters, led to a certain kind of dialogue and stylistic plurality that distinguished Fiamba from other groups within the city.

Some group members had grown up under the guidance of knowledgeable cultural practitioners and gifted performers, but this was certainly not the case for everyone. Given that

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[285] LW: Aini Fiamba mi leli bun fullu oktu. Omdat, steeds i abi te maak anga taa sama. I abi taa sama, a taa gedragen i o kisi. Da i kisi taa…verandering oktu. CC: Mmhm. Alasama tja den eigi leli, den eigi koni. LW: Mmhm. Yah.

Fiamba performed a number of genres from different ethnic groups, even if a group member learned a great deal about one or a few of the genres in Fiamba's repertoire, other genres tended to be less familiar and often took time to develop to the level of proficiency. Below I consider two different aspects of Fiamba's pedagogical processes, divided both in terms of gender and in the mode of participation.

Drumming

Rehearsals tended to have more boys and young men interested in drumming than there were drums to play, so although the atmosphere was consistently positive and constructive, there also existed an undercurrent of competition. With the group's steady infusion of new members, and the normal percussion setup consisting of only three drums, a *kwakwabangi* (percussive wooden bench), and two sets of shakers, even a talented drummer could not be assured his place at the top of a drumming hierarchy would last. Having made his own way up the percussion "ranks" from onlooker to "sakaman" (shaker player), and eventually playing the *tun* and *pikin doon* parts, Clifton was conscientious in encouraging aspiring drummers and giving them opportunities to learn.[286] Male group members were welcome to come early to rehearsal to practice, or even to practice drumming at his house on days when no rehearsal was scheduled. Younger boys with no former training often came to watch and listen as older and more advanced members practiced, experimented with new drumming patterns, and offered each other suggestions. This system rewarded those with self-motivation and those who could perform as a singer or dancer as well.

[286] Clifton was a competent lead drummer as well, but professed a preference for playing the *pikin doon* part.

**Figure 10**: Veteran Fiamba drummers "Man" Ibu Pinas and "Borsu" Sensoa Amoini talk with an aspiring drummer, who came early to rehearsal to learn by watching the other drummers warm up. (Photo by the author, 2011.)

The drummers in the above photograph had both taken advantage of this arrangement. This picture was taken in October, 2011, during a follow-up research visit to Paramaribo. At the time, Fiamba's two most experienced drummers were away on school vacation. Clifton reported that both young men featured here had devoted considerable extra time outside of rehearsal to improving their drumming skills in the 1½ years since I had last heard them. Indeed, their improvement was easy to hear. Whereas, in 2008-09, they were enthusiastic group members with minimal percussive training or experience, by 2011 they had progressed sufficiently that they were

able to perform successfully in place of their more experienced peers, both in rehearsal and performance scenarios.

Dancing "Een voor Een" (One after another)

| | |
|---|---|
| Sheryl: Mi be shen shen fu dansi… | Sheryl: I was embarrassed to go dance… |
| Sandrine: Ay, miseefi tu, mi shen! | Sandrine: Ay, me too, I was embarrassed! |
| Sheryl: Dan, mi á be go dansi, te mi a be sabi wan dansi, da, mi á be go, da mi be tampu gewoon… | Sheryl: Then, I didn't go dance [solo], when I didn't know a dance, then I didn't go, I just stood there… |
| Sandrine: Ma fa i denki ja, fa mi de ja, fa *mi*— fa i si mi, mi na wan sama san lobi piisii. Dus winsi i á sabi wan sani—winsi i e si sama e lafu mi, toch— *ma toch mi e do en*! Dus mi wani sabi en, mi wani leli en. Dus, ifu i e lafu, toch mi e puubei fu sabi. | Sandrine: But, what do you think, how I am, how *I*— how you see me, I'm a person who loves to be happy. Thus, even if you don't know something, even if—you see people are laughing at me, you know—*but still I do it*! Thus, I want to know it, I want to learn it. Then, if you're laughing at me, still I'll try to understand [it]. |

-Interview, Fiamba members Sheryl Tesa and Sandrine Akombe, July 27, 2009.

Sheryl's and Sandrine's comments referenced Fiamba's regular practice of having dancers assume center stage "een voor een" (one after the other), each completing a short, improvised solo before resuming her spot among the rest of the group. It often happened that a young dancer or a newcomer would hang back, apparently unready or hesitant to take center stage, aware of her beginner status, afraid of people laughing. The mandatory solos, a standard feature of the group's choreography in all genres in their repertoire, were moments that many dancers found profoundly uncomfortable.

When a dancer refused to come forward, as Sheryl reports having done as a new member, the group's response was remarkably consistent. The rehearsal would stop temporarily and Clifton

or one of the older members of the group[287] would state in earnestness, "A leli u leli"—we're all here to learn. Sandrine's comments in the above interview lend voice to the values of determination and self-confidence that lay at the heart of these 'pep talks.' When a reticent dancer was eventually coaxed to the front of the rehearsal area, she was not as likely to be met with comments, criticisms, and suggestions as would a beginning member of Kifoko or Saisa; for the most part, the fellow dancers stayed quiet. But, I would argue, their quietness was an important way in which they mitigated one of a beginning dancer's biggest anxieties, for no matter how she danced, her fellow groupmates made it a point not to laugh.

As was demonstrated by the efforts of beginning drummers and dancers, and by the respect accorded those efforts by the group as a whole, Fiamba maintained a pervasive atmosphere of mutual support and encouragement, helping members to develop the confidence to pursue their performance aspirations. Clifton's quiet encouragement and socially oriented leadership style played a crucial role in developing this positive group dynamic. Just as dancers were often expected to solo in rehearsals before they felt ready, performing for larger audiences, tended to happen after not much time, an extension of the learning process rather than evidence of having already attained a level of mastery.

Challenging Secular Space: Significations of Religious Belief and Inclusivity

Although conversation by group members did not often dwell on religious topics and the group welcomed all interested performers regardless of their spiritual practices or beliefs, that there were a number of devout Christians in the group was no secret. As with all the groups, Fiamba's rehearsal and performance practices were subtly shaped by the beliefs and practices of its members.

[287] These statements were made most often by a drummer who, as an individual performer, was never put under the group's spotlight in quite the same way as were the female dancers.

One evening, the Fiamba drummers stayed on after the rehearsal had officially concluded, playing and singing with one another. They switched seamlessly from one genre of music to another, as was their normal practice. At some point, the *gaan doon* player started playing *kumanti* rhythms, and the other drummers followed suit. Clifton, who had gone inside his house, rushed outside to tell the drummers to stop. He told them they were free to continue playing, but *kumanti* music had no place in his front yard. Clifton was a devout Christian, and performance of these religious traditions conflicted with his own religious principles.[288] Although there were clearly several performers in Fiamba who saw no problem with performing *kumanti* or other religious music, there were also many in their midst who were less comfortable with the practice of indigenous religions and the music associated with it. Likely the absence of music and dance specifically related to kumanti in Fiamba's repertoire facilitated their participation in the group. Clifton told me that he saw his decision not to allow *kumanti* music into the Fiamba canon as a way of promoting inclusivity. As he explained it, "the things that we play in Fiamba, everybody can hear."

These claims to religious inclusivity were complicated somewhat by various performance-related and more broadly aesthetic choices Clifton made in both rehearsal and performance. To give one example, all of the dancers in Wandelmars paraded with a prop—either a basket of sugarcane and fruit balanced on their heads, or a miniature canoe paddle. Several of the canoe paddles were decorated with phrases about God, such as 'Trust in God,' and 'One God.' Furthermore, it could be argued that Fiamba's rehearsal environment was not exactly neutral territory, owing to the fact that the façade of Clifton's house was decorated with written messages about God similar to those on the paddles. Clifton viewed his own stance on performance as a moderate one, pointing out that

[288] As mentioned in the Santigron section of Saisa's profile, Maroons who self-identify as Christian have found a variety of ways of combining religious facets of their lives with aspects of Maroon culture that have a spiritual or religious dimension to them. Clifton's interpretation is one among many.

many churchgoers disparaged even the performance of secular forms like *awasa* or *songe*, on the grounds that creative activities should be tied explicitly to worship.

Louise, who did not share her nephew's religious views, cited this as a driving force behind many changes in the group's practice in recent years. Not only did these changes influence the pieces the group would perform, but also the manner of performance. She referred to the piece, 'Sampalanga,' or, "saw the plank," to illustrate her point. Louise described this piece as having a 'covered meaning.' It refers literally to the work of sawing wood, and also the coordinated rhythmic back and forth in a sex act. In what Louise considered an effort to provide a modest presentation, this covered meaning has been further 'covered' in recent years by transferring the 'back and forth' movements to the upper body—to the upper back and hands—rather than a dancer's pelvic region.[289]

I would add that this is not to say that the group exercised a greater degree of 'modesty' than Kifoko or Saisa. Many of the moves these young women performed were deliberately flirtatious, aimed at showcasing the sexualized parts of their bodies, and several of the dancers in 2008-09 fastened their pangi skirts extremely low on their hips, exposing more of their entire midriffs than I saw any other woman do, of any age.

Wandelmars/Avond Vierdagse

The high point of the year for Fiamba members was the Avond Vierdaagse, otherwise known as Wandelmars. This four-day-long parade, in which participants traveled a different route

[289] I do not mean to give the impression that Fiamba projected a definitively more modest character than other 'cultural groups' active in Paramaribo. To give an example that is, perhaps unsurprising given the younger age of the group's membership, the young women and girls in Fiamba sported more exposed skin than did the other groups, as is generally the case in traditional Maroon attire. (Here I take care not to rely on my own projections of what 'modesty' may be, but in talking with members of the Maroon Christian community in Paramaribo, this was a recurrent criticism of young women—one example of how they did not present themselves in a 'netjes' (Dutch for 'neat' or 'proper') way.) In particular, many of the young women had taken to wearing their *pangi* skirts very low on their hips—a trend I did not find elsewhere.

through the neighborhoods of Paramaribo each day, is a Surinamese adaptation of an event that takes place annually in the Dutch town of Nijmegen. The Nijmegen Vierdaagse began in 1909, and is considered one of the largest yearly events to take place in the Netherlands (Verhoeven 2009, 17). Other, smaller scale versions of the Nijmegen event have cropped up elsewhere in the Netherlands, but Wandelmars has its own, distinctively Surinamese character.

Like the older, Dutch Vierdaagse parade, the aim of Wandelmars is to promote the population's physical fitness and general health. Those who complete all four days of the march/parade are awarded a medal, much like the official Dutch medal that is awarded upon successful completion of the Nijmegen event.[290] In addition, the Surinamese event includes special awards, which are given to groups that a panel of judges considers to have distinguished themselves in different presentational categories.[291] Mercifully, the Wandelmars festivities differ from their Dutch forebears in that they do not last the entire day; each day's parade begins in the early evening, thus avoiding Suriname's intense afternoon heat. Another significant difference is that, whereas the Nijmegen Vierdaagse involves participants walking 30, 40, or 50 kilometers daily, depending on their age category, the length of each day's route through Paramaribo varies, but tends to be considerably shorter. In 2008, the shortest day was estimated at 15 kilometers, the longest one roughly 27, and the estimated total distance walked by participants was 72-76 kilometers.

But Wandelmars is much more than a march. It is a full-scale parade, its participants join as members of various businesses, social, and political organizations, but also as members of performance collectives of various sorts. In attire that ranges from matching t-shirts to elaborate costumes, the parade is filled with song, dance, and various other entertainments. The event is

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[290] This can serve as a military medal of distinction, to be pinned onto a uniform. (Verhoeven 2009, 87.)

[291] This local adaptation compliments a general interest in competition-based performance events, as discussed in Chapter 2.

widely covered by the local TV and radio stations and newspapers, with specific places along each day's route designated as media "hotspots." Performers' stamina is put to the test, as not only are they expected traverse the entire parade route, but to do so while singing, dancing, and playing instruments.

Preparation

2009 marked the second year of Fiamba's involvement in Wandelmars, and there was a great deal of excitement and anticipation sparked by Fiamba's successful performance the previous year.[292] Clifton and two leading members—Ita Saint-elle and Faizel Pinas launched a recruitment effort, printing fliers for members to distribute at school and among friends. Former members who had maintained ties with the group came back for this one occasion. Some young people would join the group in the weeks before the AVD and stay only for the four days of the parade, while others would continue coming to rehearsals and performing with Fiamba as regular members. In these ways, the parade itself was an important tool for recruitment and publicity—many interested children and teens sought out the group after seeing them perform. The parade also served as an effective promotional tool for potential patrons; Fiamba was hired for a number of engagements following their 2009 performance.

As the date approached, Fiamba increased their number of rehearsals, not only practicing in their normal rehearsal space, but in the streets of Hanna's Lust, to the amusement of the neighborhood's residents. Clifton and other members who had participated in the previous year were also mindful of the need to change aspects of the group's performance for this, their second year of their participation. They turned their attention to creating musical and choreographic variety,

[292] Although Fiamba's participation in the Avond Vierdagse was a recent phenomenon, some continuity can be found in that this event was of comparable importance for the performance group, Maswa, during the period in which Louise was a member.

so as to demonstrate the group's versatility and creativity. Just as a CD or DVD recording motivated Saisa members to perpetually update their repertoire and performance style, Wandelmars seemed to compel Fiamba members to do the same.

Yet Clifton felt that debuting new material during the parade was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, new material was a sign that the group was going strong. On the other hand, he considered it hazardous, because other performers were there, both in the audience lining the parade route and as performers. New ideas, songs, and performance innovations could be co-opted easily, he said, without any acknowledgement of the groups that created them. I countered that Fiamba used a great deal of performance material from other sources, most of all in their presentations of *aleke*. Clifton responded by noting the discrepancy in representational power that existed between Fiamba and the groups they referenced in performance. These other groups were already known, and had much greater public exposure. Thus, when performing a song by a well-known singer, audiences would recognize the reference and understand the performance as a quotation; if another group borrowed from Fiamba, audiences were likely to think they were listening to or watching an original creation, rather than material that Fiamba had developed and considered their own. In this way, the group's lack of exposure rendered some of their performance practices acceptable, whereas if the group was better known, these same quotation practices would likely seem irresponsible or, worse, unethical.

Taking to the Streets

Once the beginning of the event had finally arrived, we set out each day on a tour of the physical and social geography of Suriname's capital city. We walked and danced past neighborhoods, industrial, and commercial areas, with their particular ethnic and economic demographics. The personal and cultural connections to bystanders and the dramatic arc of the

event itself energized this experience of place. Walking past an occasional field or unpopulated stretch afforded Fiamba a chance to make corrections, voice complaints, or to strategize what to do at the next media "hotspot." When the group passed through Maroon neighborhoods, they were met with cheers of recognition—both of individual members and of a part of the parade in which they, as an ethnic group, were represented. The downtown areas and the field that marked the beginning and ending point of each day's festivities were seething with energy. On the final day, I was amazed to see that group members, who had been struggling through the event's final kilometers, absorbed the party atmosphere at the finish line, and celebrated their successful completion of the four-day ordeal, singing and dancing alongside other participants with renewed energy for well over an hour afterward.

**Figure 11:** Fiamba parades through a residential area on Day 1 of Wandelmars

April, 2009. Photo by Myra Ann Dean.

My participation as a (transparently) non-Maroon affiliate of a Maroon performance group propelled me, briefly, into the national spotlight, and sparked a great deal of commentary within Paramaribo's Maroon community. Fiamba's efforts at uniformity—the same outfits and hairstyles for all female members—only highlighted the visual contrast between me and the other members. People ascribed to my involvement a range of meanings and significations. Some took it as a step toward the broader interest, acceptance, and appreciation of Maroon performance culture. Clifton, for instance, related it to the people of other ethnicities who he witnessed attempting the dance moves from the sidelines as we passed by. Others interpreted my participation as an unfair element of novelty that helped Fiamba garner the judges' favor—this was a competition, after all![293] Still others looked on with suspicion and skepticism—who was I, and had I earned the rights to inclusion and representation? Was I dancing 'sondro sabi'—without knowledge or understanding? The group did not place much emphasis on dance-drum interaction, there was a great deal of genre mixing and walking-oriented modes of presentation, so while talent could be judged to some degree (despite the exhausting nature of the event, and the challenge of marching and dancing in flip flops), demonstration of the finer points of technique were difficult to discern. Still others, of course, didn't much care about my participation or bother to interpret it, one way or another. I call attention to my involvement because the publicity was such that to omit it would seem negligent, but also because this sequence of events highlights one of the ways that Wandelmars was, at its core, a city event—the media and subsequent conversation involving my participation connected me to an inherently local story; through this event I was remade as a novelty in and of Paramaribo.[294]

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[293] Fiamba did win an award in the "Bijzonder" (exceptional/unusual) category, therefore leading some participants from other groups to feel justified in this interpretation.

[294] Patricia Tang's article, titled "Negotiating Performance in Senegalese Popular Music: Sound, Image, and the Ethnomusicologist as Exoticised "Other"" (2005), provides an interesting point of comparison, concerning how ethnographers' presence and participation in the activities of a group and the overall image that group projects through their performance.

Evidence of the event's city focus was pervasive. The parade was a spectacle that literally went by city residents' doorsteps, involving not just the busy streets, but residential areas as well. All the participating groups were from the city and the outlying area, and Fernandes, a locally produced brand of soda, was the event's key sponsor.[295] Recognition and identification—ethnic, neighborhood, and other social affiliations were key elements at play; demonstrations of affiliation and belonging were enacted by those who walked and those who watched and cheered from the sidelines, each energized by the other's response. It was intensely local in its meanings and modes of participation, the groups that participated, the products that were marketed and companies that sponsored it, drawing out the local media in full force.

It is easy to lose track of the middle ground between the two audience "extremes", with international audiences of tourists and foreigners on the one hand and those who feel comfortable assessing cultural accuracy or "authenticity" on the other. Certainly, this was one of the problems with Hoerburger's model of 'first and second existence' categories of folkloric performance—there is no place in the system to consider cultural heterogeneity on a local level. But the biggest event on Fiamba's performance calendar in 2008-2009 was an event focused at just this social register—non-specialist city residents, including peers, family members with diverse relationships to Maroon traditional practices, and Paramaribo's general public.

Events like Wandelmars invite us to revisit the question, what does ethnic affiliation and cultural practice make possible for members of culture-oriented performance groups? Being involved in Fiamba facilitated participation in Wandelmars, and thus ethnicity-based cultural identification was a means through which Fiamba members and affilliates could take part in city culture. But *how* they took part in the event and with whom was important. Members were able to

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[295] Nobody seemed particularly perplexed that this event, aimed at promoting healthy living, was sponsored by a soda company (owned by Coca-Cola) with a particularly high sugar content.

participate while demonstrating a particular social and cultural orientation, a nested presentation of belonging and participation—in an ethnic group, a performance group, a city and its major events. Which facets of belonging loomed largest was a matter determined by each individual participant. The point stands: Fiamba and Wandelmars were mutually affirming and mutually contributive.

Rapid Change

In an interview, Alakondre Dron director Wilgo Baarn used the phrase, "growing up in Kifoko," which made reference to the group being a longstanding performance organization that people could participate in from when they were children, into middle age. The way he spoke about Kifoko implied that it had the capacity to function as an ongoing social-educational frame. Fiamba was very different in its social and developmental features; it was a group in which members could grow and develop as performers and as culturally informed people, but the length of time that members were active in the group tended not to extend far beyond a performer's teenage years. In other words, members appeared more likely to grow up through Fiamba than to grow up in Fiamba.

In the course of a year an a half, all Fiamba's female dancers but one had left the group, joining a Wenoeza, a new group that had recently started by a former member of Fiamba. Sandrine Akombe, who had been one of the group's newest dancers in 2008, was now the sole veteran dancer. She had actively recruited new dancers from her own social and family networks, with five or six girls on average coming to the weekly rehearsals. Whereas before, Okanisi and Dutch were the predominant languages in rehearsal, in addition to the gender division—the drummers and lead singer being male, while the dancers were female—there was now a parallel ethnic divide—the drummers heavily representing the Ndyuka and the Eastern Maroon groups; the dancers, the Saamaka of central Suriname. Performances that had been developed during 2008-2009 were considered 'gaandi'—old, canonical pieces from the group's repertoire.

The members of Fiamba are people transitioning into adulthood, belonging to an ethnic group that has an ambivalent relationship to Suriname's political apparatus, residents of a city against which their ethnicity is (implicitly or explicitly) distinguished, in a country that is located on the margins of both South American and Caribbean discourses. Living at the intersection of these multiple margins, classificatory ambiguity is a fact of life. Having command over performance material that makes use of multiple categorical affiliations, and being able to use them to one's advantage, no matter the circumstances, are invaluable tools for social maneuvering.

## Conclusion

The people who take part in Maroon cultural music and dance groups occupy an ambiguous middle ground between traditional and popular cultural practice. Their creative efforts have a format and interactive framework that differs greatly from what would be expected in a village *pee*—a music and dance event—and yet neither do their uses of cultural symbolism provide a clear case of importation into an altogether different medium. Just as these groups put members in dialogue with traditional expressive and social practices, they also facilitate their absorption into the popular music scene. Fiamba members were involved in the same kind of associative experimentation—engaging with popular performance aesthetics, and likewise reinterpreting (on both practical and semantic levels) preexisting musical and choreographic material—as were the 'local rockstars' who toured regionally and internationally, performed at weekend concerts, and produced commercial CDs and DVDs.

Several of the most popular performers in Suriname during the term of my fieldwork were individuals with a multi-talent base—those who could drum or dance in addition to singing. 'Cultural groups' offered young people a forum for strengthening their base of traditional and popular aesthetic forms, and also the chance to develop their skills as multi-talented performers. As

a young group that was open to a range of combinatorial practices, Fiamba was an ideal training ground for those who aspired to become the next King Koyeba, Prince Koloni, or Norma Sante.[296]

[296] Incidentally, all of these performers incorporated dance into their performance, and their popularity is strengthened considerably as a result. Prince Koloni started out in Fondering, the *aleke* band he now headlines, not as a singer, but as a drummer. These *multiple* performance proficiencies are an ingredient for success that performance groups like Fiamba are equipped to strengthen.

# Group Profiles: Synthesis

I close the Group Profile section with a more directly comparative discussion of Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba, and their differing approaches to common themes and pragmatic issues. Here I elaborate on features that have been introduced already, and also present new information about each group, now that the reader has some general context. I argue that these groups all prioritize different aspects of traditional performance, city culture, and social relationships. While they may resemble each other in many aspects, their differences result in unique constellations of social factors, giving each group's circulation within and beyond Paramaribo a distinctive trajectory.

While the majority of this 'synthesis' section is devoted to differences between groups, their similarities are likewise noteworthy. The groups had in common their use of three *doon* (drum) parts and *kawai* ankle rattles in their performances of the genres *awasa* and *songe*. Rehearsal attire was more or less ubiquitous—*pangi* skirts were considered requisite dance attire for women at rehearsal and performance, while men rehearsed in street clothes or in athletic clothes.[297] No group was able to begin regularly at the scheduled start time, and tardiness was a common point of frustration.

To some degree, all three groups were built upon family connections, though none of them chose to foreground this aspect of their demographic. To the contrary, all groups emphasized a pan-Maroon identity, rather than claiming an overt affiliation with any particular subgroup. In Kifoko and Fiamba, distinctions between members of different Maroon subgroups could be discerned in rehearsals, as they practiced genres in which a given individual could be considered a

[297] Women (particularly older women) would wear *pangi* skirts while going about their daily business in the city. The same was not true of men and their traditional attire—particularly the *kamisa* loincloth. While male dancers in all three groups performed wearing *kamisas*, occasionally percussionists in Saisa and Fiamba performed wearing jeans and a cape (*banja koosu*).

specialist, but all groups stressed their open membership and presented their performances in reference to the broader category, 'Maroon.'

All groups maintained an established progression of genres in their rehearsals and performances. There were logical and logistical reasons for each group's choices: Kifoko maintained the established progression of genres as performed in funerary rites or other ceremonial occasions; Saisa ended their performances with genres that often led to spirit possession, thus leaving the least predictable genres to the end of their performance; and Fiamba's progression of genres created a gradual increase in tempo, leaving until last the pieces that most blurred the categorical distinctions between popular and traditional performance styles.

Finally, while some of the most public and the most financially lucrative performance engagements for these groups were for outsider audiences, this was by no means the only kind of performance in which they engaged—their social and performance aims were of a much wider scope. All groups performed for audiences of different kinds, including such intensely local events as birthday parties and funerary rites. It cannot be assumed that the most public performances were the groups' or individual members' primary focus or objective. All three groups were mindful of local audiences and were employed for events that were attended by an explicitly local crowd.

Song lyrics in Okanisi or Saramakan languages engaged with fellow Maroons specifically—all the more so given that Afro-Surinamers were the only ones who could be expected to understand the songs, and the lyrics were not typically summarized or translated for non-speakers. Saisa created a number of songs that had messages tailored to a Maroon audience, or even residents of Santigron specifically. In Chapter 4 I mentioned two songs that were designed to air Saisa's grievances against the group, Tangiba, albeit through indirect language and metaphor. As discussed in Chapter 5, Fiamba members focused their creative energies on producing new material to showcase during the

Wandelmars parade, which was an event designed for Paramaribo residents. They, too, created songs that were meant to have personal or local resonance.

Maranjaw, a young man from the neighborhood who was loosely affiliated with Fiamba, composed one song that was particularly popular within the group. This *aleke* song, 'A Mi Dugudugu,' functioned as a way of airing a grievance against his employer, who he alleged had taken advantage of him, cheating him out of money he was owed. In the song, he appeals to the members of Fiamba for sympathy.[298]

A Mi Dugudugu

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Lead: | A mi dugugugu, A mi dugugu | It's my dugudugu (non-lexical word) |
| Koor (chorus): | Ayoo Fiamba | Ayoo Fiamba |
| L: | Mi wroko gii en, a no wani pai mi | I work for him, he doesn't want to pay me |
| K: | Ayoo Fiamba | Ayoo Fiamba |
| L: | Slaafu kaba, slaafu de ete | Slavery ended, slavery still exists |
| K: | Ayoo Fiamba | Ayoo Fiamba |
| L: | Fiamba, Fiamba | Fiamba Fiamba |
| K: | Ayoo Fiamba | Ayoo Fiamba |

Another Fiamba song poked fun at the romantic relationships that developed between Maroons (especially young men) and foreigners, seen as one way in which to achieve more geographic and financial mobility. The song goads, (lead): "Me and you will marry, Mama. Me and you will make a baby… (koor/chorus):…in Holland, in America, in France." In a performance strategy similar to that used in Benny' Fonkel's solo (discussed in Chapter 4), part of the humor of

[298] The practice of publicly airing grievances through song or musical message is pervasive in Africa and its Diaspora. Fela Anikulapo Kuti was well known for criticizing Nigerian political figures in his songs within a popular idiom. There are abundant examples of related practices with which I became familiar during previous fieldwork in Ghana, including Nzema (Akan) songs (see K.E. Agovi 1992), and *halo* and *lohalo,* two forms of sung criticism (the former providing a particularly harsh and direct manner of address) practiced by the Anlo Ewe. (See Dor (2004), Avorgbedor (2001).

this song was that it could be seen as addressing foreigners directly, and yet its meaning was likely to escape any cultural outsiders who were not paying close attention.[299]

Finally, although Kifoko was, generally speaking, the most attuned to performing for outsider audiences, the group took extra care in their preparations for events at which knowledgeable Maroons would be in attendance. One such event was the 50th birthday celebration of Laetitia Tojo—former Kifoko member and wife to founder André Mosis. Several other former Kifoko members were there, as well as many esteemed guests, including Maroon scholar André Pakosie. Another such event was the 2009 evening ceremony in celebration of the Day of the Maroons, at which a number of influential members of the Maroon community were in attendance. Herman Tojo, the group's lead drummer, was admonished to take his *apinti* playing especially seriously, for a number of people in attendance would be able to evaluate his level of skill.

Beyond groups' many similarities, I found that their diverse responses to common issues provided particularly revealing points of comparison. In the remainder of this synthesis section, I hone in on five topics (authenticity, space, religion, gender, and groups' transitions from practice to performance), exploring each group's approach to these issues and the broader implications of their choices.

Authenticity

All three groups had to contend with charges that what they were practicing was not the 'real thing'— that cultural fidelity was compromised by the ways in which these genres were learnt and

[299] The linguistic similarities between the sung Okanisi words and their English equivalents, combined with a corresponding dance move that involved a rocking motion and holding one's arms as though cradling a baby increase the possibility that a cultural outsider would be able to pick up on the piece's subject matter and meaning. While my understanding was that this song was directed at non-Maroons, it could also apply to Maroons living elsewhere, including those in neighboring French Guyana which, as an overseas departement of France, entitled all residents to various avenues for financial assistance and facilitated international travel. Kenneth Bilby's dissertation (1990) examines the social complexities that arose from these differences in citizenship, which were already apparent in the 1980's.

practiced, and by the adaptations groups made in tailoring them to a broader range of social occasions, spaces, and audiences. Comparing these three groups shows that there are a variety of parameters and strategies through which group members can experience and express alignment with tradition.

Kifoko's modes of authentication included reference to the research efforts the group had undergone, the order in which they present the genres in their repertoire mirroring that of the *gaansamapee*, singing a large number of canonical songs, and in identifying as both Ndyuka-based genres by a predominantly Ndyuka group. Meanwhile, as a collective, Saisa maintained the closest connections with an actual (if atypical) village. Most of this group's performance engagements were for the Maroon community, either in Santigron or in Paramaribo. On the whole, these performances blurred the line between participatory and presentational modes of performance to the greatest degree; while they featured the most complex choreography, they also allowed for the most flexibility between group members and other event participants, particularly when the group performed *susa* and *kumanti* music and dance, during which people often became possessed by *winti* spirits. Finally, despite Fiamba's participation in a number of contemporary trends, it proved the most attractive option for several members—dummers in particular—with extensive skill and training. The variety of influences and instructors from which Fiamba members drew resulted, for better or worse, in an especially dynamic cultural practice.

Space

The Créoles have the NAKS cultural center, Indians, Javanese, and Chinese have embassies to host cultural events, but the people from Suriname's interior—the Maroons and Amerindians—have no comparable public place within Paramaribo where they can congregate or organize in order to foster their culture and performance art. Maroon performers and cultural advocates within the

city feel this lack of 'center' keenly, and are quick to point out the political implications of the situation. Performance and rehearsal spaces, as well as collections of cultural resources, are either private (including the makeshift rehearsal spaces Louise, Clifton, Dansi, and André have constructed on their property and various individuals' private material archives), or they are temporary and conditional (as with the rented rehearsal spaces of Kifoko and Tangiba[300]).

Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba had all changed locations before settling in their current rehearsal spaces. Not only do performance groups require a fairly large space that is available consistently for rehearsals in the evening hours, after school and work were over for the majority of the group members, the noise generated by a rehearsal required the tolerance of the surrounding community. In some cases, the challenge of finding a rehearsal space magnified and solidified members' suspicions that they were being discriminated against. Louise Wondel described one such interaction between Fiamba and the management for the soccer field where the group had been practicing:

> LW: We rehearsed at the football field, but then they told us 'This is not a Djuka[301] place.'
>
> C: Oh?!
>
> LW: Oh, leave me be [local expression]! So we came to this Djuka place here! [Gestures to her front yard.]

Ultimately, the location of a rehearsal, and the space constructed within that place,[302] made a tremendous difference concerning the activities that transpired there, and the overall rehearsal

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[300] Tangiba's weekly rehearsals took place at a bar/performance venue located in the neighborhood of Ramgoe, not far from where Saisa rehearsed.

[301] As mentioned in Chapter 2, 'Djuka' is a derogatory term.

[302] In his *Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), Michel de Certeau distinguishes between place and space thus: "The first . . . can be understood as a kind of locus, specifically as a plane which is "the order [of whatever kind] in accord with which elements are distributed in relationship of coexistence" (de Certeau 1984: 117). On the other hand, space is rather a geography constituted by dynamic elements which meet, intersect, unite, cross each other, or diverge. As Michel de Certeau put it, "Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities. (1984: 117)."

experience. Claiming and transforming the physical rehearsal space was itself an act of identity construction.

Kifoko's rented rehearsal space is significant for a number of reasons. That the group could afford to rent space for its twice-weekly rehearsals was a sign of prestige, as well as an indication that the group remained strong and active. It is also worth noting that many of Kifoko's senior members, including leaders Lante and Dewini, lived in Sunny Point, one of the more remote suburbs of the city. Although the central location of rehearsals no doubt inconvenienced those members coming from Sunny Point, it is also likely that to hold rehearsals on a leader's property, as Saisa and Fiamba both did, would have isolated the group, resulting in a significantly smaller group and less exposure.[303] CCS was located within walking distance of several important organizations concerned with the arts, including Theatre Thalia, the Ministry of Culture, and the Department of Culture Studies. Affiliates of these groups, including former Fiamba member Alexander Tolin, would often drop by rehearsals to observe or to discuss future arrangements with Lante or Dewini. These interactions were certainly facilitated by the organizations' close proximity.

Being in a space that, although very much a rehearsal space, was in other respects both formal and public, involved claiming and transforming a space that was not otherwise marked as their own. In a literal sense, Kifoko was sharing a stage with hip hop, ballet, and theatre groups, and this in itself placed them in an atmosphere where training, conditioning, and the idea of the professional performer were familiar concepts. One could also speculate on the ways that rehearsing in front of a wall of mirrors might affect a group's output and manner of presentation.

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[303] Not only was Sunny Point nearly an hour away from the city center by bus and on a bus line that ran infrequently, the neighborhood had a reputation as one of the rougher, more impoverished areas. During the term of my fieldwork, the community was not wired for electricity and was perpetually inconvenienced by water shortages. In short, Sunny Point was considered by most of its residents to be a place in need of social and infrastructural improvement, where basic sanitary living conditions were barely attainable. While people within Sunny Point often took great pride and care in maintaining their own property, there was little pride associated with the neighborhood itself. Therefore, in addition to logistical reasons for holding rehearsals in the center of town, we might well consider the psychological benefits of *not* identifying the performance group with this particular neighborhood.

In contrast to Kifoko's rehearsals, which took place in the center of town, before dusk, Saisa and Fiamba both rehearsed in the evenings at their respective group leaders' residences. Due to their neighborhood locations, Fiamba's and Saisa's rehearsal spaces shared many characteristics. The sound from the rehearsals became a sonic backdrop for each neighborhood. As demonstrated in my description of my weekly walks down Ramgoelaweg to Saisa's rehearsal, as members circulated through the area on their way to and from rehearsals, they contributed to (and participated in) conversation and gossip among locals. In contrast to Kifoko's public space, to attend a Saisa or Fiamba rehearsal was to enter onto private property. Those who came to watch were mostly known to the leaders of the group, or accompanied by people with an established relationship to the leaders.

All three groups attracted spectators. Due to Kifoko's location, onlookers often ranged from visiting tourists to prominent personalities affiliated with other cultural institutions within the city, to members' friends and family. Both Saisa's and Fiamba's rehearsals drew spectators from predominantly Maroon social circles. Fiamba's spectators were mostly young people; by and large group members' peers. Many visitors to Saisa rehearsals were of comparable age to the group's membership (in their late-teens to 30's), however neighborhood children would come and watch as well. As with Kifoko, the mothers in Saisa[304] would often bring their children to rehearsals, though by the time the members dispersed, their children were often slumped over, asleep, in the wooden chairs lining the dancing space.

While Saisa and Fiamba had a neighborhood setting and evening rehearsal time in common, the layout of the rehearsal space led to differences in how that space was inhabited, both by group

[304] While some couples would bring young children and arrive as a family unit I never witnessed a father bringing a child to rehearsal in a situation where he was the sole caretaker. While it was relatively easy for a man to get away from the household for an evening rehearsal, it was often difficult for mothers to transfer childcare responsibilities to others while they attended rehearsal. That said, group members seemed generally pleased to interact with children during rehearsal. With the exception of Saisa's performances in Santigron, it was rare for a woman to bring her child to a performance.

members and onlookers. The long driveway leading to Clifton's house was the primary hangout spot for non-members during Fiamba rehearsals. From the driveway, members could chat without being seen by performers, and step into the driveway itself to look over, observing the progression of the rehearsal somewhat anonymously, from a distance. The space an audience would occupy in a formal performance was, with rare exception, left vacant. By transferring from the 'old' rehearsal space to the one that was being constructed at the end of my stay, Fiamba is bound to draw more attention from passers by along the street, to whom they will be clearly visible, and the benches along the driveway will be well lit by the floodlights overhead and directly visible from the rehearsal space. This might, in turn, influence the ways in which onlookers practice their roles as spectators.

Saisa's rehearsal space was far more contained, and onlookers frequently had to cram into the limited available seating or stand close together along the perimeter of the rehearsal space in order to keep the dance space free. Interaction between audience members and group members ranged from no direct communication whatsoever to lively banter. On rare occasions a knowledgeable observer would offer suggestions or critique of some aspect of a rehearsal.[305]

When considering the three groups' rehearsal practices and choreographic decisions, it becomes clear that choreographic decisions were dependant in part on the spatial constraints of the rehearsal venue. Kifoko members were used to occupying a larger space in their routines. Moving forward and backward in a long horizontal row, one of the standard features of Kifoko's choreographies, would not have been possible in Saisa's rehearsal space.

Furthermore, an interesting relationship exists between rehearsal space and the spaces groups occupied most frequently in public performance. Just as Kifoko rehearsed with a proscenium orientation and quite a lot of room in which to move around, these characteristics were most often reflected in the theatre spaces in which they performed in Carifesta as members of

[305] Audience input proved influential, for instance, in the preparation of *awawa* for Saisa's latest CD project. The insults were deemed not as cutting or clever as they had been in past rehearsals.

Alakondre Dron, the formal presentations at national holidays and such. Saisa, by contrast, often found themselves performing in rowdy community settings where little space was available and the audience was constantly encroaching on even that small area. It often happened that *koor* members had little to no room even to perform the *boli wataa* resting dance step as they were performing, with audience members pressed up against them, jostling for a better view of the dancing.

Religion

At first glance, the role of religion and spirituality is not foregrounded by any of these groups. There is no explicit religious affiliation or stance, yet choices in repertoire and presentation indicate three very different relationships to the performance of religious or spiritual material. Yet a closer look reveals that each group's approach to spiritual dimensions of performance contributed significantly to their distinctive characters.

The village Santigron has a long-standing association with Maroon spiritual practices, including *kumanti* ceremonies, which continue despite the majority of Santigron residents identifying as Roman Catholic. In light of this background, that Saisa was the only group to include *kumanti* music in their regular repertoire seems apt. Saisa's performances of *susa* and *kumanti* music often led members of the group or the audience becoming possessed, therefore marking a dramatic shift in the performance and obliterating audience/performer boundaries. Thse genres necessitated a greater degree of flexibility on the part of the group, allowing them to accommodate a community's social and performance needs, should a *wenti* assert his or her presence.

Fiamba introduces a contrasting scenario, in which Clifton's Christian faith served to restrict which genres the group performed, and coincided with less sexual innuendo than Louise reports there having been in the past. In these ways, his interpretation of religious inclusivity did not necessarily equate to religious neutrality. Finally, while Kifoko did not include *kumanti* music in their standard repertoire, they would demonstrate the style, or even emulate the social procedures and

behaviors typical of someone under spirit possession, but only when specifically requested to do so.[306]

Although their responses to the funerary genre, *tuka*, have to do with the spiritual role of the music, Kifoko's and Saisa's approach to the style serves to highlight differences in the groups' interpretations of their social roles within the broader community. In an interview with Maria Dewini,[307] I asked her if there is any music style the group refuses to play, to which she replied *tuka* was the only one. She said that some people believed that to play *tuka* outside of a funeral setting could lead to death within the community, the connection between sound and social function was that strong.[308] Maria's response operated under the assumption that a performance of *tuka* would be on a representational rather than a functional plane—that it would be performed outside of a funeral setting.

Saisa, on the other hand, traveled as a group to *dede oso*'s and like events in order to play *tuka*. In that sense, group participation in burial rites is approached in a manner similar to other performances. Yet at funerals in which *tuka* was played, there was no division between group members and fellow mourners, *tuka* was the only genre played, and the dance maintained its simple format of slow group movements in one or multiple concentric circles, rather than any sort of innovative or stylized choreography. *Tuka* is a social performance in which Saisa members as part of a community were expected to participate, or even take a leading role, but it was not their show. Saisa members might well agree with Maria Dewini's assessment that *tuka* is not to be played outside of a funeral context, but members were quite comfortable indicating that Saisa (as a group) played

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[306] The two events that I witnessed that involved a spiritual demonstration of some kind were a lecture given by André Mosis on Maroon spirituality (delivered on 7/12/08), and as part of a religion montage performed by Kifoko members in collaboration with Alakondre Dron for Carifesta X in Guyana, on August 30, 2008.

[307] Personal communication, 1/28/09.

[308] Incidentally, Kenneth Bilby reports that similar beliefs were associated with the genre *susa*, which Kifoko performed regularly. (Personal correspondence, 04/17/12.)

*tuka*, and would organize to go to funerals and participate in the music and dancing as they would do if the event was a birthday party or some other event.

Gender

The ratio of male to female members was different in each group, and several rehearsal and performance practices reflected this feature of membership. Kifoko had far more female members than male members, and this informed leaders' decisions to isolate and focus on particular facets of performance, from singing to working on junior members' dancing technique. Group members found ways of using rehearsal time effectively, even when the drummers (or, on occasion, the drums) were not present. In contrast, Fiamba would often have more young men than women at their rehearsals—a trend that was further magnified when I conducted follow-up research in 2011. On occasion, rehearsals would run with as few as two or three dancers in attendance. Saisa had roughly equal numbers of men and women in the group at the time of this research. Perhaps as a result, rehearsals involved male dancers more frequently than with the other groups. Saisa was the only group that created choreographed routines regularly for both male and female dancers; the male dancers in Kifoko and Fiamba did not generally rehearse, and rarely performed, the choreographed moves or groupings in which the female members were involved.All three groups included men who were, at minimum, proficient dancers, yet beyond the initial learning stages, men tended to spend less rehearsal time dancing.

From Practice to Performance

Each group's practices served to prepare members for public performance in one way or another, however the interrelations between practice and performance differed from one group to the next. Although each group presented dance genres in a different sequence, they were all alike in that they maintained that same sequence for all their performances, and they maintained that same

order in rehearsal. Both Fiamba and Kifoko focused on female dancers in rehearsal, with male dancers becoming more active in performance scenarios.

Some practices, for instance Kifoko's warm-ups, had been discarded in performance situations. Among Kifoko and Saisa, older choreographies received less time in rehearsal, because those members who most often performed them were already comfortable and confident with them. Additionally, some of these choreographies were more advanced, and for that reason it made sense to focus on more basic routines in rehearsal with less experienced dancers.

In transitioning from practicing to performance, people's standing within the group was often clarified. No dancer would be invited to perform before achieving competence at the basic dance moves. Among those who were invited to perform, the ways in which their participation was dictated by leaders and veteran members of the group could offer significant information about how their skill level compared in relation to the other members of the group.

Saisa provides a pertinent example. In some ways, this group was quite liberal with their membership, allowing the largest number of regular members to perform with the group. Yet the choreographies for which the group was known involved fewer members than either Fiamba's or Kifoko's choreographies, requiring each routine over the course of a performance to be selective. Therefore, although a large number of dancers might attend a given Saisa performance, a core group of ten or fewer dancers would be involved in the bulk of performance, while other dancers would only perform once or twice. Occasionally, Saisa included dancers and drummers in their performances who came rarely to rehearsal, but whose competence or skill was already established. As mentioned in Fiamba's profile, Wandelmars was an event in which that group's membership became especially malleable.[309] The ratio of drums to drummers was likewise a touchstone through which a young drummer could measure his progress. Kifoko, the largest of the three groups, was

[309] This was true for other groups involved in Wandelmars as well, for instance the Parbo Girls, a dance group sponsored by the Parbo Beer Company, added on a number of participants specifically for this event.

the most selective in terms of who would perform, with only the veteran members performing regularly. In all three groups, there were hierarchies in place, whereby the strongest or most engaging members would perform more often or be given prime visibility during performance.

These are a few of many themes that pertain widely to these three groups, and comparable performance collectives within and beyond Suriname.

**Table 5:** Comparison of Group Characteristics

| | Kifoko | Saisa | Fiamba |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of regular members | 30 | 25 | 18 |
| Predominant ethnicities/ Maroon subgroups | Paramaka, Ndyuka | Saramaka | Ndyuka |
| Age | Wide age range, although the core dancers were older than average (in their 30's) | Somewhat even distribution in the late teens-early 30's. A few older men | Teenage majority |
| Gender Distribution | More Females than Males | Roughly Even | Slightly more Males than Females. |
| Dominant social factors | Neighborhood (Sunny Point), Family (Tojo, Dewini) | Family/Village Santigron | Peer connections (School) |
| Leaders | Eddie Lante (Leader), Maria Dewini (President) | Dansi Waterber (Leader), Edywartu Fonkel ("Boss") | Clifton Asongo (Leader) |
| Kawai | Owned by group, Used regularly at rehearsal | Owned by individuals, Used regularly in rehearsal | Owned by group, Seldom used in rehearsal |
| Drums | Three drums (on specially-made stands), occasional rattle | Three drums, kwakwabangi, rattle/shakers | Three drums, kwakwabangi, rattle/shakers |
| Principal Singers | Lucia Pinas, Irma Dabenta | Silvana Pinas Carlos Pinas Ralph Plein | Faizel Pinas (succeeded by "Borsu" Senso Amoini, 2010) |
| Secondary Singers | Marguerite, John, Minio, Vera, Henni | Tanya, Debora | Cheryl, Pookie, Borsu |
| Year of Founding | 1983 | 1991 | 1995 |
| Founder | André Mosis | George Lazo | Louise Wondel |
| Venue | Culture Center of Suriname (CCS) Neighborhood: Paramaribo Historic District Public Space | Laschmanweg Neighborhood: Ramgoe Private Space | Frederikshoopweg Neighborhood: Hanna's Lust Private space |

**Table 5, continued**

| Performance Compensation | Proceeds divided among individual performers | Proceeds cycled back into the group for projects and maintenance | Proceeds cycled back into the group for projects and maintenance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rehearsals per week | 2 | 1 | 1 |

# Chapter 6: Performance Analysis

In my initial experiences of *awasa* performance I was overwhelmed by the powerful voices of the singers, the graceful physicality and control of the dancers, and the rapid-fire barrage of drum strokes that, although obviously ordered, interrelated in ways I could scarcely comprehend. As I learned more, I came to appreciate this dance genre as one that is both more complex than I grasped initially, and also made more easily digestible as its structure and the roles of each performer came into relief. The analysis presented in this chapter is my attempt to introduce the structural and interactive scaffolding that orders the more immediately accessible sounds and movements of *awasa* performance. Many of the interrelationships discussed here are also evident in other dance genres in which Saisa, Kifoko, and Fiamba specialized. I chose to focus on *awasa* as it is the one genre shared between all three groups, and because of its place of prominence in each group.

The primary objective of this analysis is to give a sense of the character and complexity of the performance event, shedding light on the kinds of social and musical awareness, performance skills, and creative license associated with each performer's role. I demonstrate how the connections and conversations between performers shift constantly throughout the duration of each piece, requiring a perpetual re-contextualization of each part in relation to the whole.

I make a deliberate effort to grant musical and choreographic processes equal analytical weight. That music and dance are often inextricable components of a performance event is by now a relatively well-rehearsed assertion, particularly in relation to many performance traditions in Africa and the African Diaspora. Yet despite the widespread acceptance of this general claim, the character of interactions between dancers and musicians and a technical understanding of the nature of their

relationship are topics that continue to receive only the broadest treatment.[310] While ethnomusicologists and anthropologists frequently make explicit their focused interest in the sonic or textual dimensions of performance, I maintain that this kind of selectivity risks bypassing crucial logical, logistical, and creative facets of not only the dance, but the music and text as well.

The tendency to separate aural and kinesthetic realms of performance—and among (ethno)musicologists, to omit the kinesthetic realm entirely—risks distorting the communicative play that ultimately renders a performance effective or satisfying. What is more, this selective erasure is often gendered. As ethnomusicologist Kyra Gaunt notes, "Musical analysis tends to be about sound, texture, and a composer's or a performer's intention. But, by doing this, male (and many female) scholars have been "invisibilifying" (Lott 2000, 75) girls and women in histories of African American musical practice and discourse (Gaunt 2006, 11)."

In *awasa,* the instrumentalists, singers, and dancers are deeply interdependent; a conversation initiated through sound is often continued through dance, and vice versa. Given the musicians' intense physicality and the dancers' audibility through their *kawai* ankle rattles, I consider *awasa* an ideal genre through which to explore the possibilities of integrated analysis. To that end, while I divide this chapter into discrete sections based on the various roles a performer can assume (drumming, singing, dancing), each section reaches beyond these divisions to address the ways in which the players occupying these roles interrelate.

*Awasa* is the most ubiquitous dance style of the Ndyuka Maroons, and is widely performed by all the Eastern Maroon groups. It is characterized by its fast pace and clearly defined pulse, and also by its strenuous dancing style, performed by dancers wearing *kawai* ankle rattles made from seed

[310] Among the ethnographic works in which the authors grapple with the interrelation between musical and danced components is approached analytically are Hahn (2007), Gaunt (2006), Browning (1995). Although he has not incorporated dance as fully into his analyses, Kofi Agawu has long been a strong proponent of the importance of considering dance when analyzing musical function of African genres. See Agawu (2003), (1995).

shells[311]. Though *awasa* is considered secular, its characteristic movements and rhythms are also performed at spiritual events, ranging from *winti pee*'s to Sunday Church services. This genre highlights gendered ideals—the women exhibit their grace and suppleness, while the men demonstrate their strength and agility. In the *gaansamapee*[312]—the progression of dance genres performed at funerary rites and other major social gatherings—*awasa* is the last dance performed, often marking a culmination in the event's energy and excitement.

## *AWASA* DRUMMING[313]

The core of the percussion section in an *awasa* ensemble consists of three drums—*tun*, *pikin doon*, and *gaan doon*.[314] To this core ensemble can be added a rattle (*saka* or *sek'seki*), and/or a wooden bench, called *kwakwa bangi*, that is played with two sticks.[315]

Each of the three drums is similar in construction and appearance, made from a single log, typically standing just under two feet tall. The drum cavity ranges from a cylindrical to a conical shape. The drum's head, most commonly made of goat or deer hide, is fastened to the drum shell with wooden pegs, while the other end cinches at the bottom to a small opening. The *gaan doon* and

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311 The tree that produces these seeds is known by the same name; its Latin classification is the *phefepyaperu fiana*.

312 See Chapter 2 for background on *winti pee's*, Maroon involvement in various Christian denominations, and the *gaansamapee*. (The latter is also discussed in Chapter 3.)

313 The following analysis is my attempt to convey the general practices of an *awasa* performance as I understand them and as they have been described to me. My extensive experience watching and performing with dance groups far outweighs my experience of the dance form as performed by the general populace in village settings, and I expect that many aspects of the dance's structure and communicative strategies have been formalized, as the pedagogical and presentational structures of the groups are necessarily more formal and unified in character.

314 This same ensemble is standard for a number of other Eastern Maroon performance styles, including *songe*, *mato*, and *susa*. Further, these drums and their respective roles form the basis for the core drums of the popular musical style, *aleke*.

315 The *kwakwabangi* is generally considered a Creole instrument, related to the Maroon instrument, *kwakwa*, which is a long board played with two sticks.

**Figure 12.** The group, Tangiba, performs in the village of Santigron

October, 2011. At the far right are the *sek'seki and the kwakwabangi.*

*pikin doon* are generally played at an angle, while the *tun* is played either at an angle or upright, with the resonating hole at its base completely blocked. The sides of a drum are adorned with *tembee*—carved or painted with geometric patterns. Many established performance groups include the group's name or other words or phrases alongside these patterns.

Drums of this construction are known popularly as *apinti doon*, however many individuals take care to stress that *apinti* refers to the language that can be conveyed through the instrument, and only instruments especially designated for that purpose could be classified correctly as *apinti doon.*[316] Just as, in popular usage, the word *apinti* can refer to a drum or the language communicated through the drum, a terminological overlap occurs when discussing the *tun, pikin doon*, and *gaan doon*. Each of these terms can be used in reference to the name of a drum, its musical function, and the pattern

[316] This point was stressed in interviews and conversation with André Mosis, André Pakosie, and Eddie Lante. Additionally, Mosis addresses these issues in his online essays posted on his website: www.kingbotho.com ("De Taal Van de Handdrums")

that it plays. For instance, a person can play [the musical pattern] *tun* on the *tun* [drum], thus providing the *tun* [timekeeping role] for the ensemble.[317]

Drumming is designated as a male activity, and drummers are referred to as *doonman*, or the 'man' of a specific drum in the ensemble, for instance *tunman* or *pikin doonman*.[318] In all three groups with which I worked, women were free to touch the group's drums, and on occasion they would practice simple patterns, yet at no point during my fieldwork did I witness a woman performing publicly as a member of a Maroon drumming ensemble.[319]

## THE DRUMS AND THEIR ROLES:

### *Tun*

The name *tun* (pronounced "toon") is onomatopoetic, emulating the sound of the low, steady beat this drum provides. In other Maroon genres, for instance *songe*, the *tun* repeats a short rhythmic pattern, much as the *gankogui* does in an Ewe drumming ensemble or the *clave* in salsa and various other Latin American popular musics. In *awasa*, however, the *tun* drummer provides a constant, uniform pulse. Singers, drummers, and dancers all orient themselves to this regular beat,

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[317] While these various meanings tend to align, there are instances in which specificity is needed. When playing the Saramakan dance genre *bandammba*, for instance, the highest pitched of the three drums in the ensemble (the *pikin doon*) functions as the lead (*gaan doon*).

[318] Although, in this instance, names such as '*doonman*' or '*tunman*' are used within a performance role that is gendered male, the suffix 'man' when used in this way can refer to a person of either sex. For instance, the words *singiman* (singer) and *boliman* (one who cooks) can refer to either a man or woman.

[319] The Creole cultural organization, NAKS, featured a trio of young female performers who were adept at a variety of percussion styles. Their performances included song, dance, and drumming. It is my opinion that a Maroon group could adopt a similar model without much social resistance—both Kifoko and Fiamba discussed potential opportunities for women to learn and practice the drumming patterns for various dance genres— although, at present, I imagine that having a female drummer in a group featuring both sexes would be controversial. Additional restrictions would likely apply to a woman during menstruation (see discussion in Ch. 2), and also to the playing of drums in a spiritual context or the playing of drums imbued with a spiritual valence. Louise Wondel recounted that she used to play the drums as a member of Maswa, before leaving the group to found Fiamba in 2001. She was the only woman in the group at that time to perform on the drum.

**Figures 13 and 14:** Drumming Postures

Kifoko drummers, left to right: Henni Tojo (*pikin doonman*), Fabian Asidjan (*tunman*), and Herman Tojo (*gaan doonman*). Each performer's physical stance and the direction of his attention makes clear which part each is playing. On the left, the *pikin doonman*'s fingers are loose and slightly curved, and his attention is directed toward the *gaan doonman* and Lucia Pinas, the lead singer for this event (the woman at the far left of the frame.) The *tunman* performs with a characteristically solid, grounded stance and downward gaze. On the right, the *gaan doonman*'s gaze is directed outward; he follows the actions of the dancers as they perform in front to him, ready to guide them or enter into dialogue with them as the situation demands.[320]

[320] As discussed in Chapter 3, Kifoko's use of drum stands is anomalous; typically, drums are played by seated musicians.

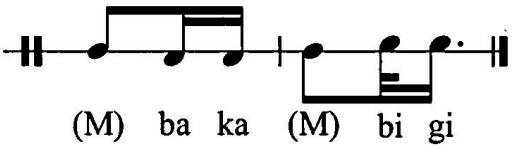
which should be played at a loud volume, at a tempo that accommodates the dancers. (It should be fast enough to provide an exciting performance and to not wear out the dancers unduly, yet not so fast that the grace and nuance of the movements are compromised in an effort to keep up. Tempos usually range from mm. 130-155.) Whereas the *gaan doon* player often dictates the pulse at the outset of a song, moving on to other styles of playing as soon as he is sure the tempo is communicated, it is the *tunman*'s primary responsibility to maintain the established tempo for the duration of the piece.

The *tun* is generally higher in pitch than the *gaan doon* and lower than the *pikin doon*, but more important than the pitch that the drum produces is the quality of its sound. Most ensembles cultivate a *tun* sound that is timbrally distinct from the other two drums. Sometimes the *tun* drum is designated as such by virtue of it being the least resonant of the three. Further differentiations in the sound are achieved though the previously mentioned practice of playing the drum upright instead of angled away from the drummer, by which means it further loses some of its resonance, or by playing the *tun* with a stick instead of the more common practice of striking the drum with a player's hand.[321]

*Pikin Doon* (Small Drum)

Although not always noticeably smaller than the other drums, the *pikin doon*, or "small drum" is the highest pitched of the three drums in an *awasa* ensemble. Like the *tun*, the *pikin doon* provides a continuous musical texture for the duration of each song. In many ways, this highly syncopated supporting role is the most rhythmically challenging of the three drum parts. In between the strong beats of the *tun*, the *pikin doon* plays one of two core rhythms, listed below:

[321] In Saisa and Kifoko, the *tun* was played with a stick.




These two rhythmic ideas are closely related—the difference between them a mere 32nd note, going by at a fast pace—yet a competent *pikin doon* player must differentiate clearly between these two cells. Both rhythmic cells are played using open tones, placed either in the center of the drum or at its rim, producing a lower or higher tone, respectively.[322] Drummer Georgio Mosis explained that these rhythmic and tonal ideas can be articulated verbally using the syllables, "mbaka, mbigi." Here the "m" sound recreates the low, dry downbeat provided by the *tun*; the vowels in "baka" and "bigi" retain both the subtle pitch differentiations between rim and center of the drum, as well as the slight variation of the rhythmic values in the two cells.

When they begin learning the *pikin doon*, players tend to alternate regularly between the rhythmic cells and pitch centers as written above. As they become more advanced, their combinations of rhythms and tones become more irregular, allowing for the creation and development of longer, more complex musical ideas. Within this narrow range of musical material—two pitch centers, two rhythms—drummers are able to create a subtle yet important layer of dynamism and phrasing in the musical texture. In moments when the *gaan doon* is absent from the musical texture, the *pikin doon* part helps to sustain the listener's interest.[323]

Below is a transcription of a *pikin doon* demonstration played by former Kifoko member José Tojo. I include his demonstration in its entirety to better illustrate how, just as he establishes a tonal or rhythmical pattern, he modifies its content, keeping the ordering of these cells unpredictable. In

[322] The drum strokes in the center of the drum are played with the fingers, while more of the hand is used at the rim.

[323] A comparable situation in an Ewe drumming ensemble would be the relationship between the *atsimevu* and the *sogo*.

this case, José does repeat the material of the opening pattern (the first nine beats) verbatim, starting on the second beat of measure 6. Many *pikin doon* players have specific combinations of cells that recur throughout their playing that they find most comfortable to play or most aesthetically pleasing.[324]

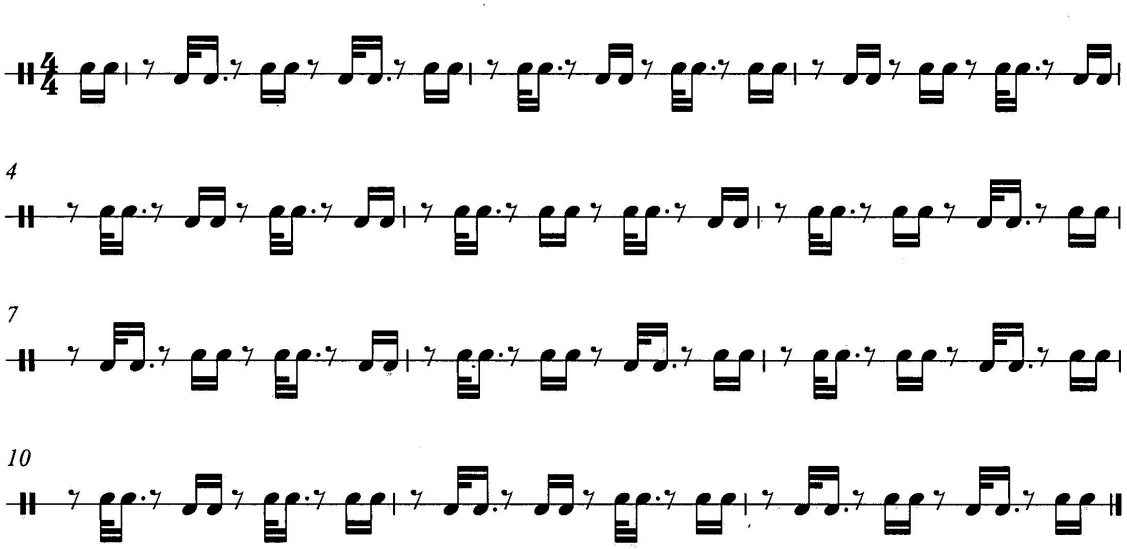



**Figure 15.** *Pikin doon* demonstration, as performed by former Kifoko member, José Tojo.

In the basic *boli wataa* dance step discussed later in this chapter, dancers step "left, together, right, together" to the steady beat of the *tun* drum, thus reinforcing a 4/4 feel to a supporting structure that would otherwise seem unmetered. (This is reinforced aurally through the *kawai* ankle rattles—the sound of stepping left or right being slightly stronger than the 'together' steps—and visually, with the full-body swaying of the dancers emphasizing beats 1 and 3.) While the basic *pikin doon* part (Figure 3) emphasizes this sense of meter, more complicated, irregular combinations of the rhythmic and tonal units can offset this sense of metrical regularity, at times stressing 'weak' beats or

[324] The measure markings in this example are included for reference purposes only—metrical implications are conferred by the song, dance, and at times by the *gaan doon*; without these parts, the metrical organization is ambiguous. Seeing as new material is interspersed between these repeated statements, this recurrence of the opening material would likely go unnoticed.

even re-organizing the common pulse of the music into groups of three, rather than the duple organization implied by the dancers' *boli wataa*.[325]

Through his perpetual response to the ongoing pulse of the *tun*, the *pikin doonman* provides a supporting role in establishing "The Time."[326] Meanwhile, through the strategic combination and variation of the two rhythmic ideas and the two pitch centers, an accomplished *pikin doonman* can respond to the *gaan doon* through musical phrasing over several successive beats. In this way, the *pikin doon* player maintains two distinct yet related and complimentary musical conversations simultaneously.

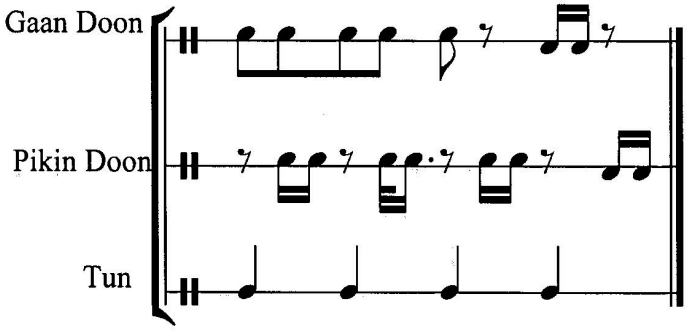



**Figure 16**: An example in which the tonal contours of the *gaan doon* are echoed in the *pikin doon* part.

*Gaan doon* (Large/Lead Drum)

More than any other player in the ensemble, the *gaan doonman* structures and narrates the events of a performance as they unfold. As the leader of the percussion section, he engages in active dialogue with fellow instrumentalists, singers, dancers, and even the audience throughout the course of a performance. His multiple roles include structuring the events of a performance, supporting

[325] Although less common, some songs (as in the abbreviated chorus of Kon Go Diingi Labaa, discussed later in this chapter) emphasize three-beat subdivisions. In combination with such songs, there are some variations of the *boli wataa* dance step that further emphasize the three-beat structure. While the *pikin doon* is typically the most active in offsetting the implied meter, dancers are able to create a similar dynamism by switching between the regular two-beat *boli wataa* pattern and the less common three-beat pattern. In both cases, these shifting metrical implications create a subtle source of musical tension throughout the course of performance.

[326] Here I use David Locke's definition of "The Time" (Locke: 1998, 11), discussed on page 45 of this chapter.

the vocalists and dancers by providing complimentary rhythmic motives, suggesting rhythmic frameworks that a dancer might choose to incorporate into her solo dancing, and punctuating the overall musical texture with short, virtuosic solos. In what follows, I narrate the changes in the content and function of the *gaan doon* part over the course of a single song/dance.[327] With the exception of the lead singer's opening solo, the *gaan doon* is an active part of the musical texture for the duration of a piece, its changing roles narrating the changes in the dance event as they unfold.[328]

The *gaan doonman* opens a performance with an introductory sequence in the *apinti* (drumming language). He begins by honoring the drum, naming the various components of which it is made, and thereby honoring the natural (and spiritual) elements that make performance possible. After delivering this initial message, a skilled *apintiman* will acknowledge individuals in attendance or craft a message that pertains to the performance occasion. Proverbs can be used in reference to these events or to give more generalized commentary.

Such introductions are not exclusive to social dances, but rather are common in a variety of contexts. The following chart compares two *apinti* transcriptions in order to show how, despite the different circumstances of performance and the many individuals whose composite interpretations are rendered here, these introductory segments convey similarities both in content and structure. Transcription/translation A contains material Maroon scholar and historian André Pakosie combined from two recording sessions with esteemed *apintimen* Anikel Awagie and Moli Sentele in the 1990's, published in a chapter concerning Akan (Ghanaian) and Surinamese Maroon cultural similarities (Pakosie 2002). Transcription/translation B is excerpted from Richard and Sally Price's *Maroon Arts* (1999), in which Peléki, the drummer for Gaanman Agbagó, is recorded at a Saramaka

[327] A performance will be broken into discrete units, lasting the duration of a single song, during which one or several dancers will perform. The structural uniformity of this process—the ways in which dancers navigate space during and between song-units—is magnified in the performances of dance groups, yet songs structure the events in less formal performances as well.

[328] In keeping track of these many functions and how they relate to the performance as a whole, readers may find it useful to reference the chart presented on p. 38 of this chapter.

tribal meeting in 1968. I have indicated shared words in bold script, and a comparable sequence of events (acknowledgement of the supreme deity → recitation of drum components → call to esteemed community members and/or spiritual entities) is easily discernable in their English translations. In an *awasa* performance, the *gaan doonman* typically concludes his introduction with the phrase, "kaba kelle kelle,"[329] indicating to those present that he is finished, and that the lead singer can proceed with her unaccompanied solo.

**Table 6:** Comparison of *Apinti* Translations

| TRANSCRIPTION A | TRANSLATION A[330] | TRANSCRIPTION B | TRANSLATION B[331] |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Odyan Koobuwa** be si ankama | Odyan Koobuwa | Ting: tjekele gín din gín din…gilíng | "Listen"; opening call. |
| Mi **Odyan Koobuwa** be si ankama | I, Odyan Koobuwa | **Asantí kotoko bu a dú okáng, kobuá**, **o sá si watera djándе**, djantanási, dum de dum; **kediamá kédiampon** ódu a sási ódu a keémponu sasi nana betie. | Recital of the drum's "praise name," including words for its parts (wooden body, pegs, ties, head); call to supreme god and the earth. |
| Fu **osiosi wataa dyande** | Of the river | | |
| Domba | Player of the consecrated drum, | | Call to junior assistant headmen; remark that "many people have sat down." |
| **Asanti Kotoko boadu** | The unity drum of the Ashanti | Opete nyán opete; sembe sindo gede gede gede, sembe sindó gede hía. | |
| Asanti Kotoko tintin | Which consists of | | |
| Asanti Kotoko man ntenbuwa | drum wood, | | Call to senior assistant headmen; call to junior assistant headmen; call to headmen. |
| Falamanpopo | The drum skin, | | |
| Kwansa | The cord and | Gídi gídi kúndu bi a kúndu; opete nyán opete; **kokóti bái batí.** | |
| | The drum pin | | |
| | Made of cedar wood | | |

[329] Pakosie notes that the drummer can indicate, "Mi kaba kelle kelle," if he wishes to indicate that he is finished, or, "A kaba kelle kelle," if his message refers to the dancers. (Pakosie, personal communication, 05/11/12.)

[330] This example comes from André Pakosie's article, "The Akan Heritage in Maroon Culture in Suriname" in *Merchants, Missionaries and Migrants: 300 Years of Dutch-Ghanaian Relations.* Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2002, 121-131. This article highlights cultural connections between the Akan groups of Ghana and Suriname's Maroon populations. Pakosie recorded both drummers in the 1990's.

[331] This example was taken from *Maroon Arts.* An audio recording of this performance is available through the Prices' 1977 Folkways Records Release, *Music from Saramaka.* One additional stanza from their transcription is excluded in the above chart for concision. The spelling and wording in both examples is as it appears in publication.

**Table 6, continued**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Afiamantanta<br>Akan<br>Gbolokoso<br>gbologbolo<br>Msi agama<br>gbologbolo<br>Futi-uti fili fili fili fili<br>Futi-uti bilimba<br>Uyumuna keeku,<br>keeku uyummuna<br>Ketekei keenki,<br>ketekei keenki ampo | The spokesman of the Akan<br>Venerable ancestors<br>The consecrated drum asks permission<br>To speak<br>He has been away,<br>But now he is back<br>A new day has broken<br>He greets you, | Kásikási têgètêgèdé. Keí keí dí día, kêtekí dí día, kilinkilíng, kiding tjêkele ding, tjêkeleding, ding din…; **kilíbe tente, odú akásambile** fu wán pandási; sekúinya kata kái na tí sekúinya; [begi]. | Call to senior women. Good morning; call to the paramount chief; proverb ("However great the problem, the paramount chief can take care of it"); prayer. |
| **Keedyamaa Keedyampon**<br>Odamankama nanti,<br>Odamankama bala,<br>Odamankama betele<br>Odyuwa Bunsu<br>Bunsu Bunsu obala | God of the universe,<br>The gods,<br>The dead and the living,<br>He greets you mother Odyuwa Bunsu | **Kediamá kédiampon** ódu a sási ódu a kêèmponu sasi naná bêtiè.<br><br>**Kilíbe tente**, **odú akásambile** fu wán pandási; alíbête benté, bébetiêbenté a falí; otíbilíbití tja ko bêèdjô; killíng king diá keng dia kéng eti; kásikási têgètêgèdé; fébe tutú máfiakata bánta násibetê; [piimísi]; atupeteezú atuá petee zú ahuun wásikan djáni bobo; [piimisi] | Call to supreme god and the earth.<br><br>Call to the paramount chief; proverb ("The water hyacinth floats down-stream with the ebb tide, but the tide will bring it back up as well"); call for liquor; apologies to the elders; call to senior women; proverb ("When the mouth starts moving, hunger is afraid"); apologies (for anything bad that might have inadvertently been drummed); call to "headmen of the river" (gods); apologies. |
| Mi Odyan Koobuwa be si ankama<br>**Fu osiosi wataa dyande**<br>**Kelebe ten ten ten ten** Odun Akansangele<br>**Kelebe ten ten ten Odun Akansanbili**<br>**Kokotibaibati**, **kokotibaibati** fu Asanti ako | Strong Odun tree on which everything leans<br>Bearer of the staff of honour of the Ashanti<br>I, Odyan Koobuwa, greet you with all respect. | | |
| Uyemuna keeku,<br>keeku uyemuna<br>Ketekei keenki<br>ketekei keenki<br>ampon | | **Kokóti bai batí**; asákpa a pênde, makáiya pênde; gídi gídi bú a fô.<br><br>Ahála ba tatá gánda volabutan; Dabikúku misí améusu; [begi]; [piimísi]; **kokóti bai batí; kilíbe tente,** | Call to headmen; call (by name) to two important ancestors.<br><br>Call to city officials; proverb ("Smoke has no feet, but it makes its way to heaven"); prayer; apologies; call |

**Table 6, continued**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **odú akásambile** fu wán pandási; ma in tene, ma in tênè búa. | to headmen; call to the paramount chief; proverb ("When a leaf falls in the water, it's not the same day that it starts to rot"). |

**Table 7:** Words/Phrases Common to Both Texts[332]

| **Transcription A** | **Transcription B** | **Translation** |
|---|---|---|
| Asanti Kotoko boadu<br>Odyan Koobuwa<br>Fu osiosi wataa dyande | Asantí kotoko bu a dú<br>okáng, kobuá,<br>O sá si watera dján de | Both Pakosie and the Prices identify these phrases as components of the drum's praise names, though the order in which they are performed and their translations differ slightly. |
| Kokotibaibati | Kokóti bai batí | Call to headmen |
| Kelebe ten ten ten Odun Akansanbili | Kilíbe tente, odú akásambile | Call to the paramount chief |
| Keedyamaa Keedyampon | Kediamá kédiampon | The supreme god /god of the universe |

Following the lead singer's solo, the *gaan doonman* re-enters with the supporting drummers. Should the tempo be unsteady, he will reinforce the *tun*, either by mirroring this part or by drumming simple rhythms that emphasize the pulse. Once the ensemble has settled into a stable musical texture, the *gaan doonman* is then free to be more adventurous in his improvisations. Whereas the *pikin doon* and *tun* provide a nearly continuous texture, the *gaan doon* player can destabilize and offset the musical texture at will. In these moments of free improvisation, drummers convey a great deal of their performance style and musical strengths, which may include their physical strength and stamina, their ability to create an exciting musical buildup, or the speed, complexity, and precision of their rhythmic patterns.

[332] To date, the most extensive listing of Maroon esoteric language, as well as *apinti* language is an appendix in R. Price's *Travels with Tooy: History, Memory, and the African American Imagination*. (2008, 309-389). (As Price notes, this is only the 'tip of the iceberg'.)

After the drummers and singers have established their musical roles and performed their initial improvisations,[333] the dancers become the focal point of the performance. It is the *gaan doonman*'s responsibility to cue the various phases of the dance, including when dancers should advance into the performance space or move back into the crowd, and at what points to transition between the 'resting' *boli wataa* dance move and the more vigorous *paata*, or solo dance. He does this, and also conveys additional information or commentary, through drumming phrases in *kumanti'pinti*, a sub-classification of the *apinti* language, which is less formal and less nuanced than its counterpart, *anwanwi* but well-suited for providing dancers with basic information during the course of their performance.[334]

Once a dancer has entered the performance space and has begun to *paata*—to dance soloistically—a particularly dynamic opportunity for communication between the dancer or dancers and the *gaan doonman* arises. Any of these performers can suggest patterns to be seized upon and interpreted by the other performers. To suggest a pattern is to *gii futu*—literally translated, to "give foot." A dancer does this by incorporating a rhythmic pattern into her dancing; the *gaan doonman* does this by repeating short rhythmic phrases that lend themselves to dance. The performers are under no obligation to seize upon any single rhythmic/kinesthetic pattern—any specific *futu* that they are given—however they are expected to stay attuned to each other for the duration of a solo passage. Due to *awasa*'s physically strenuous dancing positions, solos tend to be brief, the longer ones lasting only a few minutes. Even within this short timeframe, a solo does not stay fixed in the same sounds and motions for long before a new variation or a new *futu* is introduced.

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[333] Section B in the chart on page 38.

[334] See graphic illustration on p. 38 and Appendix (X) for the placement of common *kumantipinti* cues and their rhythmic content, respectively.

The *gaan doonman* concludes the soloistic portion of the dance by instructing the dancers to *waka gwe* ("walk go"), to return to the edge of the performance space, at which point he signals the performers to stop with a few high pitched slap strokes on the drum's rim. The brief pause between pieces is filled with cheers, exclamations and congratulatory hugs from fellow performers and audience members. Performers mop the sweat from bodies with towels and handkerchiefs, take a quick drink,[335] and reposition themselves in preparation for the next piece.

Throughout a performance, the three drums in an *awasa* ensemble combine to provide a dense and continuous musical texture, in which the main pulse, though at times syncopated by the *gaan doon* and counterbalanced by the rhythmically complex *pikin doon*, is clearly articulated. When the shakers or *atoonpai* are included in the ensemble, they further accentuate the pulse by doubling the *tun*, or offering simple rhythms that land heavily on the beat.

SONG

*Awasa* songs are delivered in a call and response format between a solo lead vocalist and a *koor* (chorus). The response phrases are predominantly heterophonic, intermittently breaking off into separate harmonized melodic lines. The ending note to each phrase is habitually elongated, overlapping with the following phrase so as to create a continuous vocal presence even while the lead and *koor* alternate.

These songs span a wide range of subject matter, drawing from proverbs, everyday activities and scenarios, and social relationships between friends, family, neighbors, employers, and lovers. The texts provide an emotional frame that, directly or indirectly, contextualizes the creative efforts of all the performers, infusing each piece with its own character. Individuals and small groups of

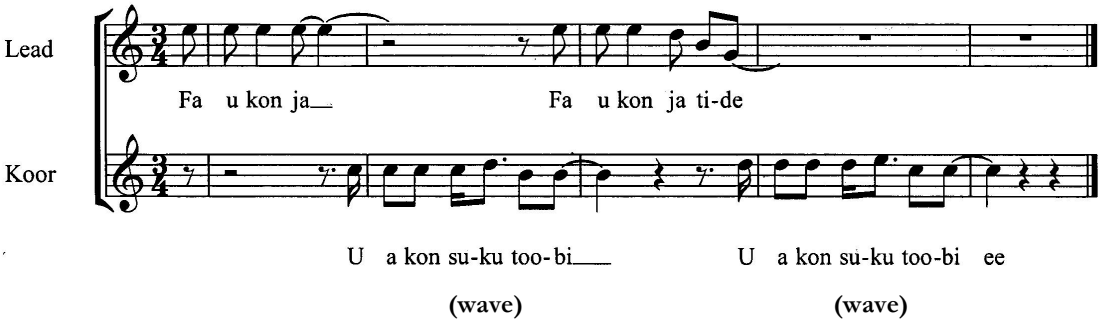
[335] Water is generally made available to performers, and alcohol is in abundance at several of the events for which *awasa* is performed. The formal groups represented in this study had varying positions regarding the consumption of alcohol while performing.

dancers may develop certain movements that borrow subject matter from the song text, either rehearsing such moves before the moment of performance or developing thematic material on the spot. Many formal *awasa* groups build upon this practice, incorporating sung themes into choreographed routines. These vary from mimetic acts (see Figure 11, below) to more involved choreography, as in 'Na Ja Ben' and 'Mi n'a e feele' in Saisa's repertoire, discussed in Chapter 4.

**Figure 17.**

Fiamba dancer illustrates choreographed move.

The *boli wataa* step is interrupted every six pulses of the tun by a hand wave of refusal. Here, the collective of female dancers enact their message—they are not looking to cause trouble—both by singing the koor and through their gestures. They retain this wave in their dancing for the duration of the song, even as they lower themselves into the more strenuous paata dancing position, as demonstrated here.




Beyond literal interpretations of the text, a song can influence the creative output of dancers and drummers in more subtle ways. Various songs make possible different rhythmic groupings and, as a result, have an influence on the variations both drummers and dancers employ. In the above

example, the song establishes two phrases of triple groupings (a full call and response cycle lasting 12 pulses, divided into two groups of 6). Guided by the melodic structure, dancers further emphasize these metrical implications by waving every six pulses.[336] Whereas solo dancers, the *pikindoonman*, and the *gaandoonman* are able to change between affirming and destabilizing these metrical implications, the call-response format between the lead singer and *koor* (chorus) offers more structural stability, providing a consistent framework for the duration of a song. Drummers and dancers can orient their actions to the song's call and response framework as well, for instance by generating their own response to the lead singer's call.

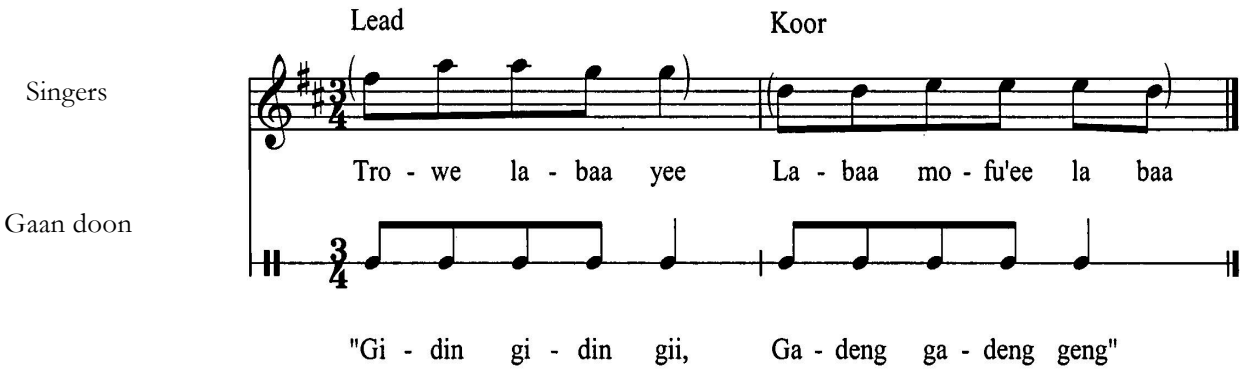



**Figure 18**. A *gaan doon* part that is based on the rhythm of the sung material.

Singers can be either male or female. Dancers and, less often, percussionists in Kifoko, Fiamba, and Siasa doubled as *koor* singers, though André Pakosie considers this a diversion from *awasa*'s standard practice, in which designated singers perform the *koor*. In Kifoko and Saisa, a few singers would stand close to the lead singer and lead the *koor*, thereby designating singing as their primary mode of engagement, though other performers were nonetheless free to join in the singing,

[336] Due to the duple organization of their footwork and their swaying bodies as they step "left, together, right, together, dancers alternate waving their left and right hands.

if not expected to do so.[337] Among Fiamba's membership, the female dancers were often criticized for not singing loudly enough as they danced, to the point where, for audiences that were not likely to understand Okanisi Tongo, sometimes the (male) lead singer would even use the word 'koor' in his calls, giving dancers a particularly pointed reminder that they were expected to perform this role while they were dancing.[338]

As mentioned in Chapter 3, *koor* is not a word indigenous to any Maroon language, but rather one appropriated from Dutch. A response phrase is likely to be identified using the Maroon term *piki*, and the singer of a *piki* could be referred to as a *singiman*, yet in the groups with which I worked, *singiman* was used most often in reference to the lead singer. I also heard the person who sang the *piki* referred to as the *koorman*. This change in word usage could be related to a changing perception of the degree of specialization required of a *koor* singer, as singing the response is increasingly a responsibility shared by a large group of performers.

To be heard over the dense, continuous rhythmic texture of the drums and the overall hubbub of the crowd requires a powerful voice, one capable of producing a volume and timbre that can cut through the sound environment of a performance. No matter the strength of a lead singer's voice, during the height of performance it becomes difficult to make out his or her words. For many of the larger performance events—both those featuring folkloric groups and those performed by a community at large— a microphone is made available for the lead singer, with an additional microphone for one or a small number of other performers to provide the *koor*.[339] Even so, having a

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[337] Other groups, including Tjotjo Baka Oemang of St. Laurent, French Guyana, have designated *koor* singers. Most groups have multiple lead singers, in which case those who are not singing the lead for a designated piece lead the *koor*.

[338] Notably, this group had the smallest regular membership of the three, therefore augmenting the performance responsibilities of each member.

[339] This is not an exclusively urban phenomenon, as PA systems are by now common equipment at funerary rites and other major occasions taking place in villages in Suriname's interior.

strong and distinctive sound, capable of projecting over the many competing sounds of an *awasa* performance, remains a valued characteristic of a singer's voice.

## SONG STRUCTURE

During the lead singer's opening solo, directly following the *gaan doonman*'s opening message in *apinti*, the audience can contemplate the message on which all the performers will "play" as the piece gets going. This is the only point at which the lead singer is unfettered by the insistent pulse of the *tun* and the measured call and response interchange that is introduced once the *koor* begins singing. Here, the lead singer gets her best opportunity to explore the text and melody of the song, using pauses and elongated syllables, vocal ornamentation, variations in volume and vocal timbre to dramatic affect.

A common practice for folkloric groups is for the songs to mark episodes in an overall performance, with a short break between each song during which performers can change places or prepare for a new choreographed idea. Multiple songs can be performed without a break in between them as well, the drummers sustaining the musical texture while the lead singer transitions from one song to the next. In the latter case, the lead singer should take care not to switch between songs while a dancer is in the middle of a solo. Such a move registers as rude, communicating indifference to the dancer's efforts. The two songs discussed below illustrate common formal features that exist between call and response.

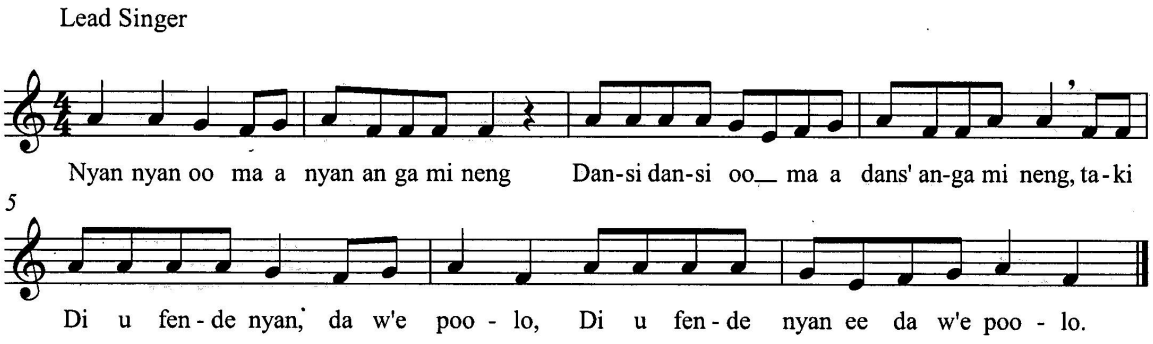
### Nyan Nyan Oo:

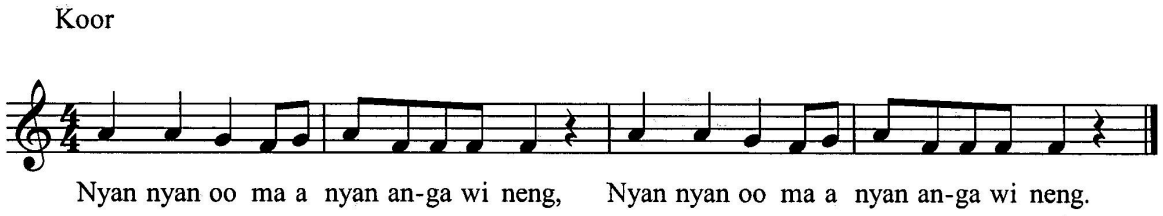
This contemporary song, composed by the members of Saisa, emerged in response to tensions they experienced in relation to a rival group (as discussed in Chapter 3). The lyrics (Eat but don't eat with our name; dance but don't dance with our name; when we find food we show off)

insinuate that this new group, of which several former Saisa members are a part, is 'eating with Saisa'a name'—using Saisa's connections to garner their own success. The transcriptions in Figure 8 marks 1.) the complete statement of the song, presented in the lead singer's solo at the outset of a performance; 2.) the basic *koor* response; and 3.) an abridged call and response pattern that is used intermittently once the performance is well underway, in order to intensify the overall mood and to create variety. Among the features of this song that are characteristic of *awasa* singing more generally are:

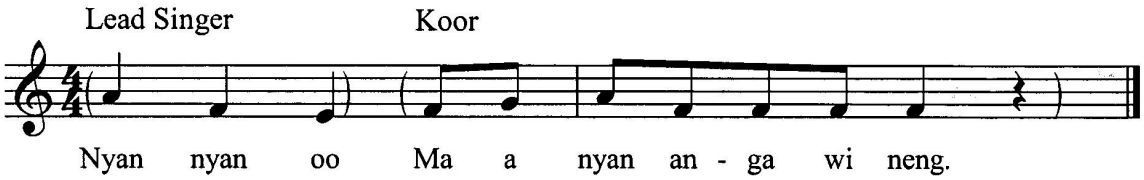
- A limited tonal range
- Phrases that can be sung comfortably in a single breath, starting out in a high pitch register and gradually descending
- The *koor* responds with the same general melodic contour as is presented in the opening call.

The same melodic contour is reworked in subtle ways as the song progresses from the opening solo to the call and response and, as the more strenuous dancing gets underway, in the abridged call and response phrases. Notice how the combined call and response take half as long as one statement of the initial *koor* phrase, making it easy to switch between the two without disrupting the overall time feel of the performance. The lead singer signals this switch with the second note of her call—repeating the initial note indicates the long version, while descending three semitones marks the transition to the abridged call and response.



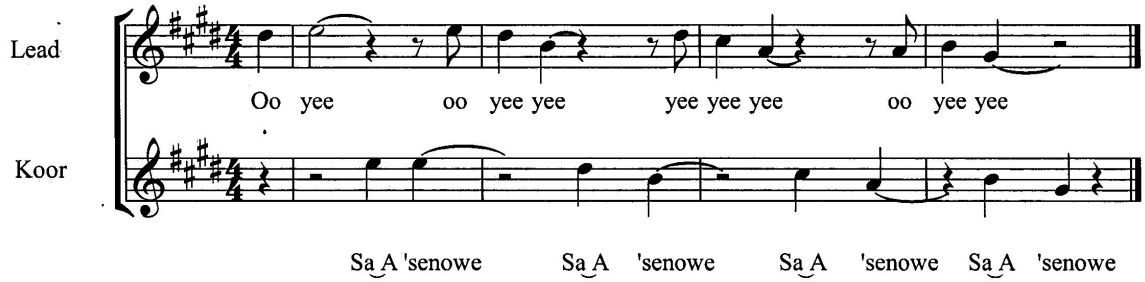



Abridged Call and Response Form:




Sa Asenowe

Sa Asenowe, one of the most well known traditional *awasa* songs, narrates the physical beauty and dancing prowess of a woman by that name. This song maintains the musical features listed in the previous song, yet here the lead and the *koor* are already exchanging sung phrases in quick succession. To create variety, then, the lead singer can opt to return to the beginning tonal area in subsequent choruses, or alternately to repeat the last two tonal areas, ascending to the highest pitches only occasionally.




VARIATIONS: TEXT AND MELODY

The quick alternation between the lead singer's call and the *koor*'s response for the duration of a song results in a highly repetitive framework. A talented singer can prevent this repetition from

becoming overly monotonous by modifying the words and melodic content of her calls. Through these variations, the singer becomes an important source of musical variety, often shaping the social and dramatic trajectory of a piece in the process.[340] This feature of (sometimes slight) variation sustained over many repetitions fits well with the particularly keen appreciation for word play for which the Maroons are known. As Sally and Richard Price observe, "Playfulness, creativity, and improvisation permeate conversation, and spontaneously invented elliptical phrases frequently substitute for standard words."[341] The call and response format gives a lead singer an excellent opportunity to play with word substitution and such elliptical phrases.

~ ~ ~

*"Bai wan keti fu mi, mi á poi bai en! Bai wan keti fu mi, mi á poi bai en!*
*I sa akisi mi baa fu mi bai en gi yu, ma I á mu tek' a tori ya fu feelanti anga mi yee."*

Translation:
*Buy a necklace for me, I can't buy it! Buy a necklace for me, I can't buy it.*
*You can ask me to buy it for you, but you mustn't take this story here to quarrel with me.*

Henni Tojo would lead this song occasionally during Kifoko rehearsals in which time was devoted exclusively to singing. Though I never heard the group perform this song publicly, I include it here because it provides a good example of the lead singer's capacity to change a person's understanding of a song as he goes on to vary its text. As Henni leads the song, he keeps its overall melodic structure relatively constant, while substituting different articles that this other person (presumably a lover, though a singer could use the projected subject, too, as a source of play) is asking him to purchase in place of the necklace. By listing more expensive items (such as a house or a washing machine), or inexpensive items that could reasonably be expected to be within a person's budget and social obligations (staple foods, for instance), listeners develop an evolving

[340] The principles behind the interchange between lead and *koor*, and also to some degree the communicative dynamics between singers, drummers, and dancers are implemented widely in Maroon song and dance, both traditional and popular. The similarities between awasa and the popular music style, aleke, are immediately apparent.

[341]Price and Price, 1999: 238.

understanding of the initial request for a necklace, which is repeated by the *koor* between each call. Larger items might suggest that the demands are unreasonable and inform people's imagination of who is making the request, while smaller items could lead to an interpretation that the man is either stingy or, alternately, quite poor. I find the persistent asking and refusal built into this song give it a poignant quality, coinciding as it does with the ever-present struggle to make ends meet that is so familiar to many Maroons and, indeed, Surinamers of diverse backgrounds.[342] The song also alludes to gender tensions and expectations in that it highlights the practice of gift exchange between romantic partners, which is an important custom that is broadly observed among Maroons.[343]

Another way in which singers create variety and interest is by making specific reference to individuals in attendance—either fellow performers or onlookers—or by making specific reference to the performance occasion at hand. The ability to improvise these calls involves making timely observations concerning the individuals present and the circumstances of the performance, all while adapting their message to the timing and melodic structures inherent to the song. The ability to negotiate these various considerations in the moment of performance, whether drawing from the subject matter of the song (as demonstrated by Henni Tojo's song) or from the circumstances of a given performance (as do the singers in the following examples) is one hallmark of a great singer.

Kon Diingi Labaa
(Audio tracks 1 and 2 on the CD)

This song tells the story of a person of simple means offering a guest *labaa*, a kind of homemade bitters, for lack of more elaborate food or drink. The humble but gracious tone this traditional song imparts, combined with its simple, spacious melody that sits comfortably mid-range

[342] This is one example in which the element of repetition alters the significance of the material being sung; the incessant repetition of the song, in which both call and response are reiterating a response to an imagined request, conveys a sense that they are reacting to a relentless demand. Related article: Monson (1999).

[343] See S. Price (1993).

for most singers, accounts its continuing popularity. I use the below transcriptions of two separate performances of Labaa Mofu ee Labaa in order to pinpoint several ways in which singers can add their own stylistic touches to a standard piece. Through participants' musical (and social) sensitivity, even a well-known text and melody can generate fresh interest and character, firmly rooted in the moment of performance.

Several aforementioned structural characteristics and methods of variation are present in both audio tracks. The singers' vocal inflections and ornamentations effectively illustrate the subtle differences that make a simple, well-known melody satisfying to hear over many repetitions. Among the vocal techniques the singers employ, many of the song's phrases conclude with a distinctive style of vibrato specific to the Eastern Maroon groups, termed *loli*.[344]

As with both Nyan Nyan Oo and Sa Asenowe, this song has a shorter variation to which the singers switch after several repetitions of the initial call and response. Unlike these previous examples, the abridged section of Labaa Mofu ee Labaa differs significantly from the opening material in terms of text, melody, while the piece's metrical implications change from duple to triple.

**Track 1**: Irma Dabenta performing informally in a hotel room.
Georgetown, Guyana

Irma Dabenta, Maria Dewini, Lucia Alankoi, and I relax in a hotel room between performances at the10th iteration of Carifesta, the Caribbean Festival of Arts, which took place in Georgetown, Guyana in August, 2008. Irma, one of two Kifoko's lead singers, had agreed some days previous to help me learn some of the songs in Kifoko's repertoire. With the heat of the day

[344] The frequency of this trill/tremolo and the exact intervals (though most commonly between neighboring pitches in a pentatonic scale) are subject to variation. *Loli* is not exclusive to older genres of music; it is also implemented in popular styles from *aleke* to *kaseko*. The veteran *aleke* band Bigi Ting is known for its elaborate song introductions with liberal use of loli ornamentation, while Norma Sante, lead singer for the *kaskawi* band, Naks Kaseko Loco, is an example of a singer from a younger generation who utilizes the same technique.

waning and the evening's activities concluded, an appropriate time to entertain my request was finally at hand. While we perched on the hotel beds, Irma sang several songs for me to record, pausing in between to offer a few words of explanation. Maria added her own voice to my tentative *koor*, while Lucia talked quietly on her cell phone in the background, offering instructions to a friend on how to add minutes to her mobile phone from Guyana.

**Track 2**: Carla Pinas and Losen Abente.
Recorded by A. Pakosie[345]

I chose to use this example, recorded by André Pakosie, in 2002 because it provides good examples of the intimate social dynamics and the stylistic range that singers can produce. In this second version of Labaa Mofu ee Labaa, the *koor* diverges from a simple heterophonic texture, with singers responding not only with different, harmonized melodic lines, but with different texts as well.[346] In both examples, lead singers draw upon other participants in their textual improvisations, yet in this second track we get a sense for the active exchange that such strategically tailored texts can produce. In this recording, personal exchanges between the lead singer and individuals present overlap and elide with the formal call and response roles of lead and *koor*, yet these improvised 'shout outs' can involve the lead singer and any other participant in an event.[347]

DANCE

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[345] This audio example (Audio Example 2 in Supplementary Materials) is taken from Pakosie 2002a, Track 34. Many thanks go to Mr. Pakosie and Stichting Sabanapeti for allowing for this recording to be included here.

[346] An important consideration to keep in mind is that the assembled singers in Pakosie's recording were not members of a single performing group that rehearses together regularly. In song as well as percussion and dance, the regular rehearsals of established performing groups encourages greater uniformity among its members.

[347] In Track 1, Irma provided opportunities for such exchanges, calling me by name and by addressing 'den oeman ya'—the women here—in her singing. None of the three women chose to verbally recognize these 'shout outs.' (For my part, I was too timid and preoccupied by learning the *koor* and recording.)

In transitioning from the resting *boli wataa* step to the *paata*, the rigorous dancing that characterizes *awasa*, the energy and excitement of a performance surges. The uniformity of the resting step dissolves into captivating demonstrations of character and skill. One dancer rolls his shoulders and wrists smoothly in their joints, the fluidity of these upper body movements counterbalancing the constant activity of his feet and ankles. His face shows no indication of the strain caused by dancing in a deep knee bend while balancing on the balls of his feet. Another dancer demonstrates his athleticism by leaping up into the air, then appearing to fall recklessly to the ground in a move that could have come just as easily from a b-boy dancing on a New York City street corner. A woman dances as though moving against a current, the slow, supple flow of her hands, shoulders, and back seeming to work against some invisible form of resistance. Her hips swish languidly as she steps in place, maintaining the deep squatting position for which *awasa* is known. A man and woman approach each other flirtatiously, the man making stylized advances, dancing energetically, as though trying to catch his partner's attention. The woman smiles while keeping an indirect gaze, her whole foot stamping the ground powerfully with each step, seeming to create her own sphere of energy that these flirtatious advances cannot penetrate.

The core of *awasa* dancing can be located in a single posture, its fundamental step— a sideways left, together, right together—is simple enough for even a beginning dancer to grasp.[348] Whether in spite of this core simplicity or because of it, *awasa* dancing accommodates a seemingly limitless spectrum of technical and expressive virtuosity, which ranges in scale from subtle nuances to gymnastic feats and moments of audacious theatricality.

[348] I use the term 'fundamental step' to describe the stepping sequence most common in *boli wataa* and also in *umanpikinfutu*. Although the dancing sequences of *mannengeefutu* vary more widely, the fundamental posture and step continue to inform the positions and footwork in this more improvisatory style.

Despite the diverse array of movements employed in *awasa* and the variety of ways that performers utilize a dance space, there are several dimensions of the dance that are well suited for analysis. These include the structure of the dance, the dramatic arc of events, the characteristics of the general steps and their function in performance, as well as the interaction between drummers and singers. Through studying these components, it becomes easier to recognize when and how dancers are engaged in manipulating form and content in constructing their own distinctive performances.

The simplicity of the basic footwork is counteracted by an overall posture that is extremely challenging to sustain over a long period of time and to mobilize throughout a performance space. Onlookers' satisfaction in watching a dancer navigate space or perform a challenging move is intensified by the performer's ability to make the inherently taxing, initially awkward positions and steps appear comfortable, even graceful—a site of play rather than of struggle. In order to gain this kind of physical fluency, beginning dancers spend most of their time practicing the squatting posture for which *awasa* is known, trying to appropriate its characteristic angles and quality of movement into their own kinesthetic vocabularies. This time-earned command over a challenging posture lays the foundation for the movements described below.

Exercise: Experiencing *Awasa*'s Basic Posture

I developed this exercise as a teaching tool, finding that through this sequence of movements, newcomers to the dance were able to assume the angles and alignment characteristic of *awasa* posture.[349] I recommend that readers try the exercise themselves—physically experiencing the posture fosters a greater understanding and appreciation of the challenges dancers face and the strength, flexibility, and agility the dance demands.

1. Stand with feet hip's width apart, toes facing forward.
2. Reach upward, keeping the back straight and lengthening the spine, then slowly bend forward at the hips until the torso is parallel to the floor.
3. Maintaining a straight back and long spine, bend your knees, coming into a deep squat.
4. From this position, raise your ribcage and upper torso so it is facing forward (as opposed to facing the ground). This should create a deep curve in the lower back. Bend your arms at the elbows, keeping them loose and close to the body.

Upon arriving at step 4, you will experience what many consider the cornerstones of awasa dancing posture—a deep knee bend and grounded stance, and the characteristic curve in the lower back. Take a moment to notice what muscle groups are strained and what other parts of the body maintain a relatively wide range of motion. Experiment with bending your knees more or less—how does this change your experience of the posture? Try taking steps forward and to either side, noticing how changes in foot placement and weight distribution can produce dramatic changes in the positions of the legs, in particular the angles of the knees.

## AWASA IN MOTION—BASIC MOVEMENT VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURE

While *awasa* dancing accommodates a diversity of moves and choreographies, nearly all performances share the same core sequence of events. Interspersed with the *boli wataa* resting dance step, dancers approach the main dancing space (*waka kon*), engage in several successive spurts of soloistic dancing (*paata*), and return once more to the outskirts of the performance space (*waka gwe*). They do this individually, in pairs, or as a small group.

Once they have arrived in the center of the dance space, dancers can orient themselves in a number of ways in relation to the drummers, to onlookers, and to one another. Traditionally, onlookers surround the performance space, thus a dancer can expect to be looked at from all sides

[349] To be clear, dancers in an *awasa* dance would not go through this set of movements, but rather by lowering their center of gravity directly from the upright posture of the *boli wataa* dance move.

as she performs. Isolations of the hips and lower back (in addition to the face and the front of the body) are points of interest for audience members, mitigating any need for solo dancers to keep a frontal orientation to onlookers, and ensuring that there is no one ideal vantage point from which to view a performance. As dancers face away from onlookers, audience members have a moment in which to admire the finery of their clothing, which often boasts ornate cross stitching, appliqué work, or decorative crocheted borders. Often, dancers face the *gaandoonman* when communicating directly with him, whether that communication is through instructions delivered in *kumantipinti* or through the mutual play of the *gii futu* exchange. When the dance space is shared between multiple performers, however, dancers' attention is most frequently directed toward one another.

*BOLI WATAA*[350]

*Boli wataa* translates to English as, "boil water." This move is a side-to-side step, which creates a gentle swaying motion in the body. As she sways, the dancer bends her arms and circulates her hands close to her body in front of her, keeping her wrists hands relaxed and fluid in their movements. (This motion reminds me of the alternating circular movements of turning the ropes in a game of Double Dutch, but at a more relaxed tempo.) The *boli wataa* step is the first movement a dancer performs, and is likewise the step to which she returns after each bout of strenuous dancing. I call this a resting step because it counterbalances the taxing knee bend required for *waka kon*, *waka gwe*, and *paata*. Upon hearing the name, I associated the rolling, circular movements of a dancer's hands and wrists with the way boiling water circulates in a pot, yet none of the people I interviewed offered (or supported) a direct correlation between the movement *boli wataa* and the domestic action which shares the same name.

[350] For the notation of the drummed calls used most frequently by the groups Saisa and Kifoko, see Appendix (#).

Although this step functions as a chance for dancers to rest, it also offers opportunities for a dancer to demonstrate their grace and musicality, particularly in the subtle bouncing of the knees and the practiced nonchalance with which dancers circulate their hands. The attention paid to such details is evident in the differentiations made between the *boli wataa* step as performed for *songe* and that performed for *awasa*, which differ slightly but explicitly in foot and arm positioning.[351]

Dancers are seldom the only individuals to *boli wataa* during an event; singers and onlookers often adopt the step as well, or an understated version thereof. Many people find it easier to sing in time when performing this step, which causes a performer to move sympathetically with the basic pulse as provided by the *tun* drum. The communal movement of the dancers and singers can be contagious—in some of my video footage, it is clear that the person operating the camera (sometimes me, sometimes a friend of mine or a generous acquaintance) adopts the swaying motion of the *boli wataa* step while filming.

When performed in groups, particularly by formal groups like those I studied in Paramaribo, dancers often aim to synchronize their swaying with those next to and across from them, thereby creating a visual show of unity. In the rehearsals I attended, dancers who stepped left when those beside her stepped right, or vice versa, would be informed that they were "boxing"— bumping into their neighbors because they were out of synch with the group. Concern with this phenomenon seems to be a larger issue in formalized group performances, rather than local community performances.

*Waka kon, waka gwe* (advance, recede)

These are moves of locomotion, carrying the dancer toward or away from the dance space, respectively. Groups and individuals perform this move in a variety of ways. Kifoko and Fiamba

[351] See Appendix C, Genres.

dancers maintained flat-footed steps as they navigated through space, stepping with each beat of the *tun*. Saisa dancers, on the other hand, knocked their heels against the ground between each step, subdividing the main pulse into two. When transitioning from the *boli wataa* to *mannengeefutu*—the male soloistic style—a dancer performs a variation of *waka kon* by lifting the heel of whichever foot did not receive the weight of a step, angling the heel and ankle away from the body. In so doing, he shifts his weight forward in anticipation of the dancing that is yet to come, in which he is precariously balanced on the balls of his feet.

**Figure 19**: Waka kon/ waka gwe in mannengeefutu style[352]

*PAATA*: *UMANPIKINFUTU*, *MANNENGEEFUTU*

The dance section of this chapter opened with a description of some of the ways in which dancers add character to their performance as they *paata*—dance soloistically. This virtuosic dancing

[352] Figures 10a-10c were drawn by the author.

is divisible into two gendered styles *umanpikinfutu* ("woman child foot")[353] and *mannengeefutu* ("man foot").

**Figure 20**: Umanpikinfutu

**Figure 21:** Mannengeefutu

The two above illustrations show the foot positions for A.) *umanpikinfutu*, and B.) *mannengeefutu*. In comparing them, the greater range of motion possible in *mannengeefutu* is immediately apparent. The comparatively small range of flexion in *umanpikinfutu* results in a body posture that remains fairly constant throughout performance, though it, too, is subject to perpetual nuance and inflection. *Mannengeefutu*, by contrast, allows dancers to crouch close to the ground or stand nearly upright, to turn or travel through space in a short amount of time. While some dancers maintain the characteristic *awasa* posture throughout their solos in *mannengeefutu* style, many other dancers transition constantly between this posture and a variety of other positions, taking advantage of their larger range of movement.

With the addition of the *kawai* ankle rattles, this difference in kinesthetic range registers aurally as well as visually. *Mannegeefutu* allows for the ankle to move horizontally and vertically while the ball of the foot maintains contact with the ground. As most *awasa* dancing involves stepping in time with the beat of the *tun* drum, the added ankle flexibility of *mannengeefutu* allows the dancer to

[353] Others call this same movement style umasamafutu, which translates roughly to "woman foot".

articulate subdivisions of this pulse as he changes the position of his ankles. Dancing *umanpikinfutu*, the sound of the *kawai* varies depending on the force with which the foot hits the ground (in fact, the dynamic range of the *kawai* rattles is greater in *umanpikinfutu* than in *mannengeefutu*) yet articulating metrical subdivisions between steps is not possible while the heel maintains contact with the ground.

The change in movement style as dancers transition from the preparatory *boli wataa* and traveling steps to the virtuosic *umanpikinfutu* and *mannengeefutu* is coupled with a changing relationship between these dancers and the *gaandoonman*. Whereas, up to this point, the dancers had listened to *gaandoonman* for directional cues (we might even think of this as the dancers' response to the *gaandoonman*'s call), the *paata* and *gii futu* performance practices signal a transition to a much more fluid, free-form dialogue, in which the *gaan doonman* and the solo dancer(s) offer each other rhythmic/choreographic patterns on which to play.

*GII FUTU*

The term *gii futu* was introduced earlier in this chapter in relation to the *gaandoonman*. *Gii futu* is an exchange between dancers and the *gaandoonman*, in which rhythms conveyed by one performer are incorporated into the performance of the others. A rhythm given by the drummer might be answered in a way that registers both visually and aurally.

In thinking about the social and structural functions of "*gii futu,*" I find it instructive to think about other things that are "given" in Okanisi language construction. Two of the most common examples include thanks (*da*) and greeting (*odi*).[354] To give thanks or greeting is a voluntary act, though it is often required in order to fulfill social expectations; it is thus a contribution to an important social and/or creative structure. Yet in order for these social gestures to be successful,

[354] Other examples include "gii piimisi," to beg pardon, and "gii mato" to exchange riddles. Both these examples have an interactive framework that underscores the point I make with "gii da" and "gii odi."

they have to be acknowledged by the audience to whom they are directed. In traditional Maroon social practice, giving thanks or giving a greeting involves entering into a complex and structured interchange between the initiator and the recipient; the gesture's social efficacy requires the participation of both members.[355]

Likewise, the action *gii futu* acquires its meaning and function as the kinesthetic/rhythmic pattern one performer suggests is taken up and interpreted by others. As with giving thanks or greeting, each *futu* a performer suggests is both voluntary (in terms of content and timing) and required in fulfilling the social and aesthetic expectations of the dance form—if neither drummer nor dancers varied their performance during a solo, with the expectation that this variation would in turn change others' performances, the result would be a decidedly flat and uninteresting solo. While the act of suggesting creates variety and interest, other performers' responses to these suggestions heightens the overall effect, while also attesting to the skill and experience level of the performers or the ensemble as a whole.

Given the amount of attention placed on the feet, it is worth noting that the dancing surface can have a dramatic effect on a performance. Consider how one might dance differently on sand or wood, smooth cement or asphalt, and how these surfaces would be more or less accommodating indoors or outdoors, after a heavy rain or while baking in the midday sun. Another consideration that has a major impact on a dancer's alignment is the distribution of weight, either over the dancer's whole foot or the ball of his foot. Not only do seemingly subtle adjustments resonate across a dancer's entire frame, they are often magnified, creating widely differing shapes, particularly in the position of a dancer's knees.

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[355] See Chapter 2 p. (#) for a characteristic greeting in Okanisi. While, in that example, I call attention to the ways that city residents often truncate these verbal exchanges, further research is necessary in order to determine whether a similar process is underway in non-verbal exchanges. I do contend that those exchanges between drummers and dancers that rely on *kumanti'pinti* are becoming abbreviated and are diminishing in their complexity, however it is more difficult to determine whether the *gii futu* has changed in character. Further research would be especially interesting because the patterns exchanged in the *gii futu* are not, to my knowledge, imbued with lexical meaning and therefore the character of this exchange is not directly threatened by a dwindling knowledge of any particular language system.

Although a dancer's feet are clearly a point of focus, especially in terms of the rhythmic dialogue of *gii futu*, the unsounded manipulations of a dancer's body are likewise involved in establishing or playing with a rhythmic idea. To communicate effectively with a dancer, the *gaan doonman* has to watch the dancer's movements as keenly as he listens to the rhythms they produce, a fact to which the intense outward gaze of the *gaan doonman* in Figure 2 attests.

## GENDERED MOVEMENT

As they *paata*, dancers often exhibit a great deal of gendered movement, yet the boundary between male and female styles is more often a site of play and experimentation than of strict enforcement. While some people use these gendered movement styles in constructing a politics of appropriateness of a given performance[356], these distinctions are by and large a matter of personal opinion; few if any attributes of either the male or female style are explicitly off limits to the opposite sex. It is particularly common for women to transition from female-gendered *umanpikinfutu* to the male-gendered *mannengeefutu* over successive spurts of dancing. Even when a dancer performs a step that can be classified as belonging to the opposite gender, many of the nuances of the style, including the positioning of the hands or the angle of a dancer's head, can give a male step a feminine quality or a female step a masculine quality.

Some general trends in gendered performance of *awasa* include the following:

**Table 8:** Trends in Gendered Performance of *Awasa*

| Female Gendered Movement | Male Gendered Movement |
|---|---|
| Pronounced curve in the back<br><br>Indirect gaze<br><br>Emphasis on fluid movements, rounded | Straight torso/upright torso<br><br>Quick rotations of the wrist (A flick or switch motion) |

[356] I take this term from Deborah Heath's article, "The politics of appropriateness and appropriation: recontextualizing women's dance in urban Senegal" *American Ethnologist* 21(1) 2009, 88-103.

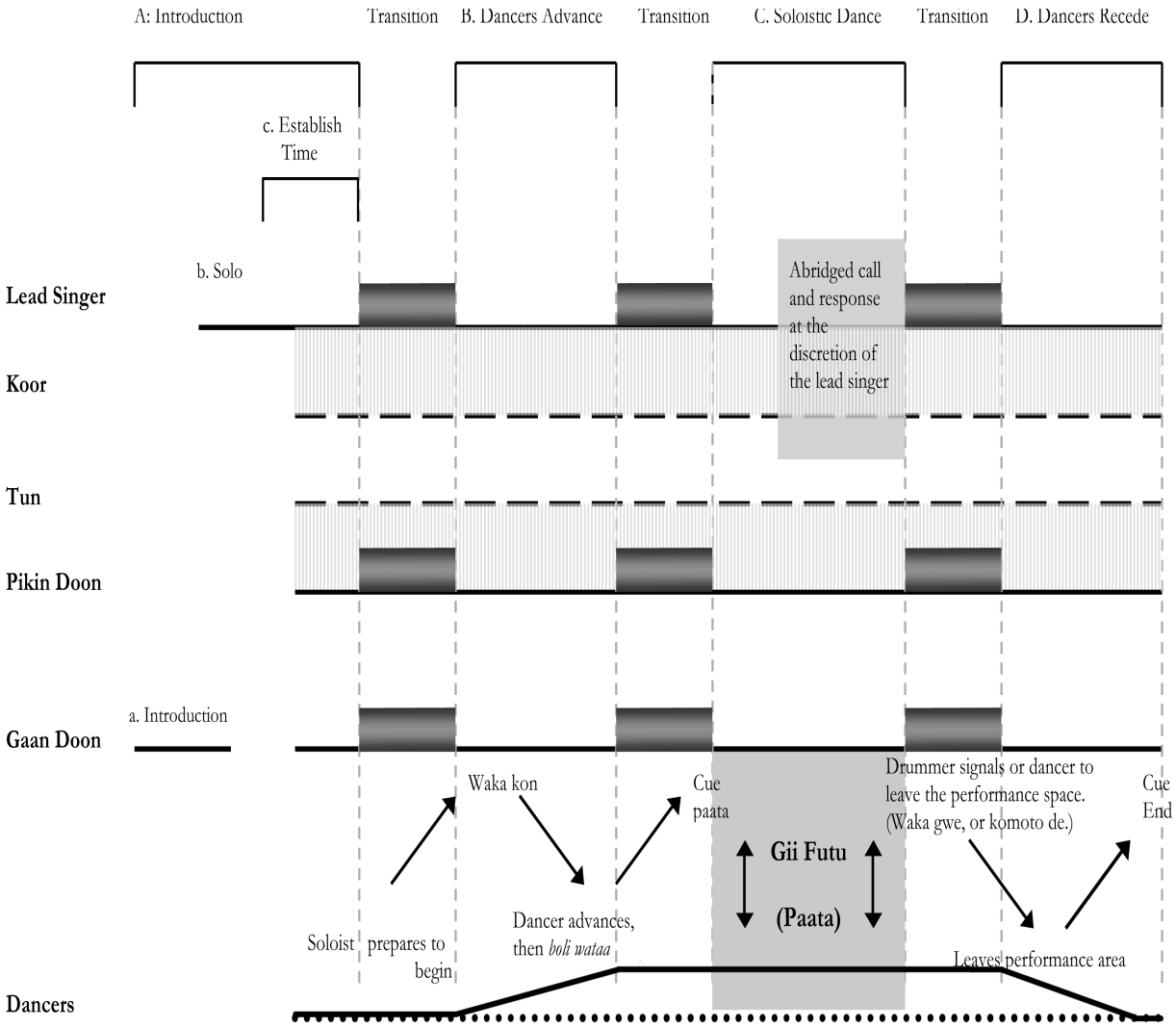
| | |
|---|---|
| shapes<br><br>Hip movements include a side-to-side "swishing" motion | Arms move further away from the body, often extended out in front of the dancer, angled slightly toward the ground<br><br>(Vertical) levels range from upright to crouching<br><br>Fingers held together or in fists<br><br>Inserting dramatic pauses, acrobatic stunts, or theatrical gestures in the middle of a solo |

Table 8, continued

SYNTHESIS

The graph on the following page is my attempt to create a framework through which different pieces can be contextualized and compared, without over-determining the content of performance, which can vary dramatically from one event to the next. Up to this point in the chapter, my description and organization of *awasa* drumming, singing, and dancing corresponds with a horizontal reading of the above graph, section-by-section. The graphic rendering makes it easier to trace the weave of connective threads of performance, both in terms of the progression of events for each individual part (the horizontal plane), as well as the co-occurrence and interactions between performance roles (the vertical plane). An understanding of the structural and interactive features of *awasa* requires an appreciation of the dynamic interplay between the warp and the weft.

**Table 9:** Integrated Analysis Graph



**KEY**

A field of heightened communicative/improvisatory potential for the performer as a result of a thinner sonic texture

An interactive relationship that contributes to an ongoing rhythmical or metrical framework. Each performer's contribution is based on one or a limited number of short patterns that are repeated over a long duration.



An interactive process that is of a short duration, and intensifies the level of activity and excitement of the performance

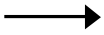


A supporting role with extremely limited options for variation, with a primary objective of maintaining a constant musical texture



A performance role that features ongoing interaction within the performer's section and also a potential for dialogue with other sections

The solo dancer part is indicated with the solid line, the supporting dance part with the dotted line. This can indicate one dancer, or a number of dancers who enter the dancing space at the same time. Changes the in vertical level of the solo dancer line indicate a change in the performer's level of differentiation (spatially and in terms of performance role) from the supporting dancers. While all other performers establish and maintain a specific role for the duration of a piece, it is possible for a dancer to alternate between the roles of soloist and supporting dancer. The above graph illustrates a piece in which a single dancer (or group of dancers) acts as soloist, and the piece concludes shortly after they recede from the center of the performance space.



Indicates the direction of communication through time

Reading the Graph

If one segment of this structure is to characterize *awasa*, it is section C, in which all performers are fully engaged and the amount of interactivity between parts is at its peak. Although the durations of all of these sections are highly flexible, the *paata* is consistently the longest, often lasting longer than the other segments combined. In some performances, especially when the general population is performing as opposed to a designated dance group, sections B and D can be very short, with abridged communications between solo dancer(s) and *gaan doonman*.

Though it is easy to interpret the *gaan doonman* as dictating the activities of a dancer (or, at least, a dancer who is attentive to his directions), the character of their interaction is not a unidirectional flow of information from drummer to dancer; the *gaan doonman*, too, responds to the dancers' actions. Dancers are more likely to dictate the timing and duration of each section and of a given piece. A dancer who tires easily will prompt a drummer to create a *paata* of short duration, while a dancer who clearly wishes to continue dancing will do so of her own accord. Likewise, the duration of sections B and D are dependent on the amount of time dancers take in reaching the center or periphery of the dance space. The directional arrows on the graph are to indicate these two parts' dialogic function.

This interactive feature is related to a broader point about the variety and character of interactional forms that can be described as call and response. Although call and response forms have in common some degree of dialogue between two parties, there are a number of ways of calling and responding within a performance context that are differently structured and can enact various social and musical roles. Some indication of the range of functions call and response forms can have is evident within *awasa*. Consider, for instance, the differences between call and response interaction between the *gaan doonman* and dancers, compared with that of the lead singer and *koor*, or between *tun* and *pikin doon*. In the latter examples, the two parts "lock in" to one another, creating a

dense and interactive sonic texture, yet should one performer or performance role not enter at the expected time, its complimentary part is to continue keeping on, without any drastic alteration in timing. Different rules of engagement are exercised between the *gaan doonman* and the dancers, in which the roles of caller and respondent can change within the course of a piece. While it is most common for the *gaan doonman* to cue a solo dancer, it is by no means rare for the dancer to initiate a new rhythmic/choreographic pattern, or "futu," for the drummer to follow. Further, when a lead singer calls attention another individual or group in her song—and that individual, in turn, acknowledges the singer—they are taking part in a variety of call and response that has nearly the opposite function as does the steady exchanges between the lead and *koor* or the *tun* and *pikin doon*. While the latter establishes an ongoing musical texture, the former punctuates it.

Interrelations

On a broad structural level, the various roles that performers can assume in *awasa* are: timekeeping, providing a constant pattern with limited variation, and performing patterns with a great deal of improvisatory freedom and minimal timekeeping responsibilities. Broken down in this way, we can see that all three performance roles are represented within each section of the ensemble.[357] The chart below organizes performance parts in terms of their functional affinities, however there are ways in which the function and communicative profile of each performance role is distinctive.

[357] A possible fourth performance role—undoubtedly an important feature of a successful performance—is the interjection of commentary and praise (physical, musical, or speech-derived) in relation to the events that transpire within performance. This fourth dimension is possible in some form by all the performers, and it is also a primary mode of participation open to onlookers. Of the performers, the saka player (if there is one), the koor, and the resting dancers are ideally situated to participate in this way.

**Table 10**: Functional Affinities between Percussion, Song, and Dance

| | Percussion | Song | Dance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Timekeeping (Maintaining the tactus) | Tun + pikin doon (also atoonpai and saka) | Lead + Koor | Boli wataa |
| Constant Pattern w/limited variation | Pikin doon | Koor | Umanpikinfutu |
| Improvisatory | Gaan doon | Lead singer | Mannengeefutu |

Although I did not hear performers talk about the group in terms of these strata, some clue of the perceived interrelation of musical/choreographic/affective function between singers, percussionists, and dancers is evident in the verbs used to describe the "doing" of various performance roles. In addition to the commonly used verbs, "naki" (hit), "singi" (sing), "dansi" (dance), and "pee" (play), other words describe more specifically the interactive/structural characteristics of a given part. Many such words are ascribed to performers in multiple sections of the ensemble. For instance, "koti" (cut) is a verb that can be linked to dance moves involving quick, assertive, and abrupt articulations, usually of the hips or midsection.[358] It can also be said that a lead drummer will "koti" *gaan doon*, exercising a level of virtuosity and a crispness of articulation that is similar to its danced counterpart. Likewise, "waka" (walk) is implicit in the dance moves, *waka kon* and *waka gwe*, yet a *pikin doon* player can also be said to "waka" *pikin doon*. To give a third example, the response to a call is termed "piki" in Okanisi. In *awasa* performance, this term applies both to singers in performing the *koor*, and also to the *pikin doonman* as his part responds to the incessant beats of the *tun* drum and potentially to the larger phrasal units of the *gaandoonman*.

Considering these structural continuities between discrete sections of an ensemble draws our attention to likenesses between various performers and performed material. It may help us recognize states of awareness and potential sites for dialogue common to performers with a shared

[358] A prime example of how "koti" manifests itself in dance is through the sharp, twitch-like movements of a dancer's hips in the Saramakan dance, bandammba (also termed bandammba). These moves are called "koti mindii" (cut middle). See Appendix X.

performance function, or, in experiencing *awasa*, these different strata might help an onlooker process what is happening in performance.

Yet at the same time, alongside these similarities are several important differences. A dancer, for instance, is in a unique position of inhabiting two or three of these different performance functions within a given piece. Further, a dancer performing *umanpikinfutu* does not necessarily accompany or occupy a role that is subordinate to a dancer performing *mannengeefutu*, and she can be engaged in dialogue with the *gaan doon* in much the same way as a dancer performing in the *mannengeefutu* style.

To cite another example, singers and supporting drummers share a structural/functional likeness (indicated by the grey striped fields on the graph), yet the pairs differ in terms of their communicative and improvisatory capacities. Both the singers and drummers maintain the time in two parts, in which one member of each pair (the lead singer and the *pikindoonman*) has the potential to communicate across sections, while the other (either the *koor* or *tunman*) stays comparatively stable. The difference arises in light of the latter group. In some instances, as in Audio Track 2, *koor* singers are able to implement some subtle variation in pitch, rhythmic contour, and even the text, while collectively maintaining a response to the lead singer's call with relatively constant rhythmic and tonal character. By contrast, the *tun* remains unchanging throughout the piece. Although the lead singer shares with the *gaan doonman* and a dancer performing *mannengeefutu* a great deal of improvisatory freedom, she is beholden to the metrical structure of the piece being performed; improvisations must fit into a regular, finite number of beats, or else the balance of the call and response exchange with the *koor* will be unsettled.

In his important and controversial work, *Representing African Music*, Kofi Agawu states emphatically the close relation between rhythmic timelines—*topoi*, as he calls them—and dance.

> "No one hears a *topos* without also hearing—in actuality or imaginatively—the movement of feet. And the movement of feet in turn registers directly or indirectly

> the metrical structure of the dance. Conceptually, then, the music and dance of a given *topos* exist at the same level; the music is not prior to the dance, nor is the dance prior to the music."[359]

Agawu's statement that a *topos,* or timeline, is equally dependent on music and dance is an idea that I think warrants continued attention, and could bring about far-reaching changes in the analysis and dissemination of African and African Diasporic music/dance genres. While the structural/functional properties of the *tun* in *awasa* lies somewhere in between *tactus* and *topos* (or engages properties of both simultaneously), Agawu's observations here speak to the central importance of the kinesthetic ordering of sound in creating a sense of "The Time," which David Locke describes as "[The parts that] articulate and embellish the key musical phrase which "sculpts" time into a distinct "shape," thereby implicitly establishing the music's meter."

Even so, often it is insufficient to mention dancers in a general sense. To give an example, although it is in conversation with the music's steady pulse, the often erratic dancing of the *mannengeefutu* style would not necessarily lead one to a more grounded experience of the *tun*.[360] Here again it becomes important to consider different structural and communicative functions within and between sections of an ensemble. Likewise, Locke's conception of "The Time" can only be usefully implemented in an analysis of *awasa* if performers other than percussionists are considered. The ordering of the pulse into a larger shape is the role of the supporting dancers (through their kawai and visually through their swaying bodies) and through the alternating call and response phrases of the singers.

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[359] Agawu (2003), 73. While I certainly support Agawu's general point, I find the universality of this cognitive experience and the primacy of the feet as dancers' de facto site of articulation are both contestable points.

[360] Here I am considering the *tun* as being roughly comparable with a timeline, or *topos*. As I argue in an earlier footnote (footnote 10, this chapter), there are ways in which the concept of a musical timeline as it is most commonly conceived is an imprecise fit for *awasa*. In terms of the conceptual link between music and dance, however, I consider Agawu's observations applicable.

The structure I have illustrated in the graph on page 38 is intended to help organize the sounds and movements of performance, however I wish to emphasize that each part is distinctive. Through the organizational schema I introduced above, my intention is to produce a framework through which both commonalities and differences will be easier to identify.

Given the uniqueness of each part, it might be reasonable to conclude that an *awasa* performance could not seem complete without the participation of all sections of an ensemble. 'Completeness' is a subjective matter, yet I do want to point out that dancers, singers, and drummers can and do practice and perform *awasa* with one or even two sections of the ensemble absent. I consider this a testament both to performers' awareness of *and* their complicity in the other realms of performance.[361] Lyrical, rhythmical, and choreographic sensibilities are drawn upon by every section of the ensemble, as are structural, soloistic/improvisatory, and supporting performance roles.

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What is the purpose of analysis and transcription, particularly in an era when audio and video texts can travel with increasing ease alongside written accounts? Throughout this chapter I have illustrated, graphed, and analyzed various technical and communicative features of performance with the purpose of helping readers gain focus on specific phenomena. Performers operate with attention paid to prescribed moves and postures, but the line between prescribed and improvised, between conformity to distinct ideals and the expectation of stylization, is especially hazy. As I witnessed and performed this dance genre, I came to understand the pleasure and excitement of performance as existing not in the technical prowess of the performer alone, but in how, through those technical skills, a dancer could demonstrate awareness and participation in the event as a whole; talent was most satisfying as a means, rather than an ends in itself.

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[361] Saisa's recording sessions, discussed in Chapter 4, provide one example of such a situation.

With this in mind, I consider it analysis' greatest service to the genre to introduce the technical and interactive structures that order the more immediately accessible sounds and movements of *awasa* performance. Through taking a performance or performance practice out of 'real time' and examining its composite parts, its creative, communicative, and historical links, we are afforded a glimpse into the satisfaction afforded connoisseurs of the genre; we also get a sense for the complex mixture of timing, musicality, improvisation, rhythmic sensibility, and physical discipline that talented performers wield on the spot. These are impressive when outlined in a detailed fashion, but it also bears testament to the phenomenon of bodily knowing, for the often complicated visual and sonic responses that are produced in the moment of performance owe a great deal to the cultural-performative conditioning that is physically acquired and deployed as a result of long-term practice and exposure.

# Conclusion

"Baka mi famii, na Kifoko."

*After my family, it's Kifoko.* John Binta, Kifoko

"Mi de a Saisa, te mi meki dii pikin, mi de a Saisa ete. Dii. De feti anga mi, omen sowtu sani—toch mi de a Saisa ete."

*I was in Saisa, when I had three children, I'm still in Saisa. Three. They fight with me, all sorts of things—even so, I'm still in Saisa.*

Silvana Pinas, Saisa

"Mi *lei* a wroko pe fu komoto go pee."

*I lie at my place of work so I can leave and play (perform).* "Carlos" Josimba Corason Pinas, Saisa

"Mi group, eigenlijk san mi be lobi, be de Fiamba. Yah. Fiamba mi be lobi. Mi be gii mi ati in' a Fiamba. Dus, di mi go a Holland seefi, a eerste lesi…dus, te a oefen dei doo—Veedag—da mi be denki soso Saanan."

*My group, truly what I loved, was Fiamba. Yah. Fiamba I loved. I gave my heart to Fiamba. Then, when I went to Holland, the first time…when the rehearsal day arrived—Friday—then I thought only [of] Suriname.*

Louise Wondel, Fiamba

Involvement in Kifoko, Saisa, or Fiamba can be a matter of intense pride, and group members often develop close bonds. The once- or twice-weekly rehearsals keep acquaintances and friends in regular contact, generating sustained communities of affinity and descent (Shelemay 2011, 367) despite, at times, living at opposite ends of the city. Both in rehearsals and through performance engagements within their social networks, these 'cultural groups' grieve together, celebrate together, take notice of each other's developing proficiencies, and bear witness to the high and low points in each other's lives. Group membership can have the added benefit of leading to opportunities for travel, for recognition, and perhaps some pocket money. But in nearly every interview I conducted, group members expressed their main objective in participating in these groups using phrases including, "Kiibi i culturu" (Keep your culture), "Sabi i gaansama sani" (know

the things that came from your elders), and "Teki leli" (take [your] lesson/learning). Staying connected to Maroon cultural practice was expressed as a matter of primary importance.

Personalizing Tradition, Revisited

Although the people I interviewed seemed to agree on the importance of this connection, as groups and individuals they strove to attain it through a variety of means. The concept of personalizing tradition as I conceive of it relies on the veracity and interrelatedness of two statements: first, that 'keeping your culture,' 'knowing the things that came from your elders,' and 'taking your lesson' are subjective processes and, second, that the ways in which one undergoes the 'keeping,' the 'knowing,' or the 'taking' is directly related to what is kept, known, or taken. I suggest that personalizing processes can be thought of as inherent to cultural consumption and a requisite element of its demonstration—one aspect (in a Wittgensteinian sense[362]) through which engagement with tradition can be considered.

I do not mean to imply that tradition is comprised solely of individuals' subjective imaginings. On the contrary, I think that the communicative properties inherent to genres such as *awasa* are powerful forces in generating certain kinds of community through practice. We see this, for instance, in the codependence of call and response in its various iterations—whether between *tun* and *pikin doon*, lead singer and *koor*, or between dancer and drummer in *gii futu*. Likewise, performing awareness—tailoring one's part to compliment what is happening within the broader collective—is a

362 Two quotations from Wittgenstein's *Philisophical Investigation* (1953) illuminate the concept of aspect as it pertains to this situation. First: "I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I *see* that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience 'noticing and aspect' (193e)." The second occurs shortly thereafter, in contemplating the ways that a person can talk about the duck-rabbit image alluded to in Chapter 1: "But what is different: my impression? my point of view?—Can I say? I *describe* the alteration like a perception; quite as if the object had altered before my eyes. "Now I am seeing *this,*" I might say (pointing to another picture, for example). This has the form of a report of a new perception. The expression of a change of aspect is the expression of a *new* perception and at the same time of the perception's being unchanged (196e)." What I wish to emphasize here is that, although recognizing a personalizing aspect of a situation does not change its social or performative properties, but it does lead to a transformation of how one sees that situation as a whole, including all of its other aspects.

communally recognized marker of a performer's skill. Opportunities to demonstrate awareness abound; for instance when a *pikin doonman* notices and incorporates into his own playing the rhythmic contours of the *gaan doonman*'s part, when the lead singer calls out to members of the audience or picks a song that is particularly fitting for an occasion, or in a playful interaction between dancers as they share the dance space. These socio-performative ideals are unifying elements that generate a certain kind of community and sociality. In this sense, it is fair to say that, just as performers personalize tradition through the features of their engagement, each performance genre impresses upon performers its own communicative blueprint.

Yet focusing on the aspect of personalization sheds light on specific phenomena and expressive features that I am particularly keen to highlight in this study. First, it encourages consideration of performance process. Many differences between groups or individuals run deeper and encompass much more than might appear in watching the performed 'product' of their efforts. Second, it focuses attention on distinctions among the activities of people who could be said to be engaging in the same processes. In this study, a focus on the personalizing practices helps to uncover some of the social and experiential components that make these groups, which so resemble one another in many respects, so strikingly and importantly different in others.[363] Third, through a situational and phenomenological research methodology, it offers access to the poetic dimensions of engagement with tradition. The underlying point, however, is that focusing on personalizing tradition is one way to recognize the adaptation that is involved in the process of cultural consumption, regardless of the social circumstances in which a form of creative expression is learnt.

[363] Again, here I find that my project is linked to Kenneth Bilby's Ph.D. Dissertation (1990), in which he discusses how a group (in his case the Aluku Maroon subgroup) will at times define itself most strongly against the groups that they most resemble (the Ndyuka Maroons).

The 'Group Profiles' (Chapters 3-6) each expand upon a separate theme that can be considered a technology of personalization.[364] In Chapter 3, Kifoko's rehearsal practices serve as an example of how a range of ideas and values (in this case those associated with nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and professionalism) can be transmitted in the process of learning and rehearsing Maroon music and dance styles. Speaking from the vantage point of a modern dance scholar, Ann Cooper Albright remarks on the same general phenomenon:

> Behind every different aesthetic orientation and style of movement within the field of dance dewells a view about the world that is transmitted (albeit often subconsciously) along with the dance technique. […] These physical and verbal discourses concerning form, style, beauty, movement phrasing, and the like, combine to create a powerful ideology that can dramatically affect a dancer's own subjectivity (Albright 1997 32).

The importance of studying rehearsal practices is clearly demonstrated in Chapter 3, for it is in rehearsal that the ideas are made explicit and the boundaries of the group's aesthetic norms are most clearly defined. Through discussion and (verbal or physical) corrections, it is possible to get a sense of the concepts that inform a person's creative practice, and what they intend to convey in performance. These concepts may not have specific, identifiable visual or sonic correlates, yet they can have a tremendous impact on a performance.

Elke Kaschl writes, "Every embodied act harbors the possibility of challenging, playing with and transgressing the norm. At the same time, however, every act is always also normative, a conservative reiteration, which through its enactment reinscribes its own discursive conventions (Kaschl 2003, 13)." Folkloric performances, in particular, are conservative in that they emphasize a retrospective point of view. Such performances are meant, at least in part, to reflect what is culturally representative. Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate two ways in which groups are able to

[364] I agree with Kyra Gaunt that "The social body as a tool or method of artistic composition and performance…continues to be overlooked in the study of music (Gaunt 2006, 59)." Scholars including Nigel Thrift have been taking a complimentary approach in the physical sciences, advocating for broader recognition of the ways that biological and technical functions of the human body are deeply intertwined. (Thrift 2005, 468.)

present culturally familiar material while also using that material in ways that challenge conservative interpretations of culture and tradition.

The three Saisa choreographies I presented in Chapter 4 play upon the combination and substitution of known forms and known social realities. Through their various combinatorial strategies, performers draw lines of identification, engaging with people who "get" the various references being made, to the partial exclusion of others. Thus, people who might not be familiar with Maroon performance forms might be surprised to recognize a reference to a facet popular culture, or Maroon cultural insiders who are unfamiliar with the particular individuals performing might remain unaware of the hidden significations on which a particular choreographed routine plays. In this way, social and cultural inclusion is reconfigured so that the performers in Saisa, who in many ways occupy the margins of Maroon cultural discourse, have the greatest access to the meaning and significance of the narrative choreographies being performed.

In Chapter 5, examining the many sources from which Fiamba draws prompts a reconsideration of what we know a thing *as*—do we know *loketo* as a part of a shared African cultural legacy, or likewise a chorus from a popular *aleke* band as a part of Maroon traditional practice? Does Fiamba's quotation of the children's game, "Tjeeki tjeeki" register as 'child's play,' as an indication of group members' cultural foundation, or as a previously quoted text made commercially popular through the *aleke* singer Zus Mien? Fiamba's performances are full of material that can be variously interpreted.

Comparison

In comparing Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba, I aimed to draw out parts of what I perceived to be the markedly distinct characters of three groups that shared a geographic proximity and similarities in their repertoires and the kinds of engagements at which they performed. Based on extended

fieldwork among all three groups, I explored the range of choices through which one person or group's practice of tradition was crafted to suit their needs, interests, and ambitions. Important social and ideological orientations were developed and enforced through verbal instruction, advice, through reflection on past performances, and in anticipation of those to come. I have demonstrated that such orientations are also embedded in the features of rehearsal spaces in how individuals circulate therein. I mean to call attention to the importance of rehearsals and other 'backstage' elements of groups' activities as rich sites for ethnographic research. Many of my findings have been discussed in the 'synthesis' section of the group profiles, yet certain distinguishing elements of groups' social makeup warrant reiteration here.

Among the factors that I consider especially influential in a group's creative decisions and the process of self-identification are their demographic makeup and their social and professional affiliations. These attributes and social orientations are addressed to some degree in all of the group profiles, but in each profile I single out and expand upon one specific facet that I found to have an especially strong impact on that particular group. In discussing Kifoko, I foreground their affiliation with Alakondre Dron, which functions as Suriname's national music and dance troupe. The second profile highlighted Saisa's strong ties to Santigron, a village whose proximity to Paramaribo makes possible a relationship between city and village that, on the one hand, allows for a level of contact that would not be possible across greater distances and, on the other, exposes Saisa members and Santigron residents to challenges to the 'authenticity' of their traditional practices based on their particular social and historical situation. In the third and final profile, I focus on Fiamba's youth demographic, and in particular the ways in which their young membership is reflected in their pedagogical style.

Further, comparison makes clear how performing Maroon genres engages with a number of different facets of life—it entails the construction of specific spaces for performance and the

development of patterns of inhabiting that space. These three groups all had to make decisions about what role spirituality would play in practice and performance, and how a spiritual orientation might be conveyed to various audiences. Pedagogy emerged as a powerful factor in each group, reflecting and enforcing group hierarchies, as well as a range of social and creative ideals. Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba all garnered public exposure through different events and media channels—through their many institutional affiliations, images of Kifoko members became symbols of Maroon culture, promoted through digital and print media, both nationally and internationally. Saisa gained exposure through the commercial release of CD's and DVD's, and Fiamba's biggest media event was the Wandelmars parade. A comparative approach makes it possible to generate a composite of some of the group characteristics that might influence a person's choice of one group over another. Each group's social and creative practices led to different possibilities in terms of the roles a person might play, the benefits that might be attained through group participation, and the social connections that might be forged or strengthened as a result.

Integrated Analysis

As meaningful as the groups are on social and ideological levels, that is not to undermine the importance of the music and dance styles that bring these people together in the first place. My approach to performance analysis is separate from the comparative content of the three preceding chapters, yet it, too, relates to personalizing tradition. Without considering the specific ways in which social actors animate a performance form in space and time, it is easy to imagine a traditional performance form as something that simply plays itself and, therefore, as something over which individuals have little influence. A structural analysis of *awasa* makes clear the interactive properties and opportunities for individuation that are built into the genre's formal logic, highlighting the networks of awarenesses through which performers build upon each other's creative input.

Through what I call *integrated analysis*, I explore the communicative links between the three 'sections' of an *awasa* ensemble—percussion, song, and dance. I advocate for the consideration of the interconnected and codependent features of music and dance, for this is, in fact, one of the most dynamic and exciting points of play in performance.

## The Politics of Cultural Representation

> […]African or African-American culture at any given moment was less and achieved state, the end-result of a historical process, than an ongoing argument about what elements of a shared past were relevant to a current situation. And different African and African-American slaves had differential degrees of access to shaping that argument as they tried to incorporate the residuum of their past into the circumstances of their present. The epochal transformation of African into African-American culture was at the level of its everyday enactment cross-cut by politics of gender, age, origin, etc, by a present struggle, that is, over who had the power to define the relevant elements of a shared past.
>
> (Johnson 2003, 119.)

In the above quote, Walter Johnson reflects upon the construction and perpetuation of cultural forms in a historical context, yet present-day cultural practices and representations are no less influenced by the social and political conditions of the moment of their conception. The members of Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba are deeply involved in shaping what from the past is relevant to the present for both cultural insider and outsider audiences. Performing at a wide range of events for diverse audiences, these groups exercise a considerable amount of influence over the conceptualization and consumption of Maroon cultural forms. Despite their marginality in Maroon cultural discourse, these urban-based groups are socially powerful through the fact of their greater circulation and public exposure.

For the most part, this study has highlighted the ways that 'cultural groups' and their individual members exercised personal expression and agency, generating performance practices that

leant each group its own particular character and flair. The members of Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba demonstrate effectively that impulses toward preservation and innovation are not in strict opposition with one another, but rather converge and diverge as circumstances change. The personalizing aspects of tradition offer seemingly boundless opportunities for individuals to exercise their interpretive freedom within a cultural idiom. Yet expressions of identity are contingent upon shared categories, and while groups' performances and practices might assuage some people's needs, they are cause for alarm for others.

Among Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba's harshest critics are fellow Maroons, many of whom believe strongly in the same cultural imperatives on which these groups were founded. Whereas group members and many of their followers consider the activities of Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba a way of preserving, maintaining, or otherwise engaging with Maroon cultural practices that would not otherwise be available or accessible to urban Maroons, others see the same collectives as contributing to a proliferation of pedagogical shortcuts that could catalyze the loss of knowledge that is a prized connection to earlier generations of Maroons. To be sure, Maroon 'cultural groups' have influenced practices of cultural consumption among Maroon and non-Maroon audiences alike. New pedagogical practices change both the manner of learning and the character of the material learnt. With the comparatively easy access of these performance collectives, some speculate that younger generations will be less inclined to pursue more painstaking and intensive study of Maroon music and dance forms.

Additional pressures in favor of cultural conservativism result from the exceptional status of Maroon societies within the broader narrative of the African Diaspora. Surinamese Maroons in particular are the inheritors of an uncommonly strong line of cultural and historical continuity, linking present-day Maroons with the societies from which their ancestors were taken. They have a remarkable story that holds tremendous symbolic power within the discourse of the African

Diaspora as a whole. To what degree, then—or indeed, in what ways—are Maroons encouraged to embrace change? Michael Herzfeld's metaphor of the pedestal and the tethering post strikes me as particularly applicable to this situation (Herzfeld 2004, 31). The cultural and symbolic specialness of this society within African Diasporic discourse causes Maroons to be placed on a pedestal, their historical legacy making possible different modes of cultural transmission and creation among Africans in the New World. When viewed in a different aspect, however, this pedestal can be seen as a tethering post, limiting the range of interpretation and adaptation that contemporary Maroon societies can embrace before falling out of externally determined realms of acceptability.

While there is a Euro-American tendency to consider play as a frivolous thing, the events and activities that Maroons designate as 'play' (*pee*) involve high stakes in the intersecting realms of cultural identity and economic and political autonomy. At its core, then, 'play' is serious business. The social and cultural needs that performance genres address do not always align; likewise, while Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba offer creative solutions to members' immediate concerns, the resiliency of Maroon expressive forms on a broad level relies on the existence of multiple, at times contradicting performance practices and modes of engagement.

# Appendix A:

Table 11: Comparison of My Involvement during 2008-2009

| | Kifoko | Saisa | Fiamba |
|---|---|---|---|
| Leading Warm-Ups | Frequently | No | N/A |
| Dancing in Rehearsal | Front line.[365] Treated as an intermediate dancer. | Invited to rehearse intermediate and advanced choreographies. Treated as an intermediate dancer. | Front line. Treated as a lead dancer. |
| In Performance | Seldom performed with the group. (Performed at four events throughout the 1 ½ years of participation with the group.) | Invited/expected to perform at all group events, but in a somewhat limited capacity. (Typically 1 awasa duo with a male dancer; 0-3 additional routines, usually *awasa*.) | Invited/expected to perform at all group events as a lead member. |
| Documenting Rehearsals | Occasionally | No | No |
| Documenting Performances /overseeing others' recordings of a performance | Yes, often. | Yes, while also performing. | Occasionally. (Usually preoccupied as a performer.) |
| Drumming | In Rehearsal: Rarely, when male drummers were absent. Supporting parts only. In Performance: Never | In Rehearsal: Never. In Performance: Never. | Pre-, Post- Rehearsal practices, occasionally. In Rehearsal: Never. In Performance: Never. |
| Singing | *Koor* (chorus) | *Koor* Included on Saisa's 2009 CD | *Koor* |
| Coaching inexperienced dancers | Seldom | Never | Never |

[365] Kifoko and Fiamba both organized dancers into two horizontal rows, with the more advanced dancers in front. Second line dancers did not have as many opportunities to perform solos.

# Appendix B:

History of Kifoko, by André Mosis,[366]
English translation by Corinna Campbell

Forward

In the following I, Noeki André Mosis "Kingbotho," will relate briefly how Kifoko emerged from a workplace of an artist to, ultimately, a social and cultural association.

In this overview I will limit myself to the earliest years [of the group's] development, 1982 to 1989. In this period I gathered together various information on Maroon culture that the association required, as well as [information for] the Surinamese community at large.

- I write this overview in the first place for the leaders and "sympathizers" of the association Kifoko.
- Secondly, for students in secondary school who are in search of information on the development of Maroon organizations in Paramaribo.
- Thirdly, it has come to pass that many Maroon organizations that have ceased to exist, or themselves have no written information over the history of their group, their activities and services to the Surinamese community.

Before the composition of this overview, I consulted many resources. In addition to reports and newspaper articles I made abundant use of my own archive and the daybook (journal) that I have maintained throughout the years. At the time, I was employed by Cultuurstudies, a branch of the Directorate of Culture. Through Cultuurstudies I was brought in to develop and support projects concerning the music culture of the Maroons. Dr. Terry Agerkop, the former head of Culture Studies, also supported my search for a way of getting others involved in my cultural activities. I used equipment from Terry Agerkop in order to conduct interviews and record music. I was also an affiliate of the Academy for Higher Art Education, where I came into contact with learned artists who leant me technical knowhow in my work.

[366] Taken from André 'Kingbotho' Mosis's website: www.kingbotho.com. Included with permission from the author.

There was a vacuum when, in 1979, André Pakosie left Paramaribo to live in the interior. In 1968 Mr. Pakosi founded the ABJO, "Algemene Bosneger Jongeren Organasatie." Since then he organized events in which Maroon culture was central. Pakosie took mostly initiates and culturally knowledgeable people from the Maroon community and gave them important roles in the development of activities. Pakosie developed a network of predominantly influential Afro-Surinamers from political and business arenas, who were able to foster an awareness of the importance of Maroon culture in Paramaribo. In the period when André Pakosie resided in the interior, there were no events similar to those Pakosie organized in which the citizens of Paramaribo could take part.

The lack of Maroon culture at national and international events also played a motivating role to take on more cultural work. Because of my experience as a painter, I chose visual art to mediate or to disseminate more knowledge about Maroon culture. I had earlier sought to interest boys, above all, in Maroon culture. Through meetings with many young men of Maroon parentage I gathered that they needed training in Maroon art forms, such as music and dance. During the development of Kifoko I also made use of other art forms ("podia") such as folk theatre and drama. Although, in the first seven years (1982-1988) I was the instigator [founder of the group], the overall result of Kifoko's growth to a nationally known organization is primarily thanks to: the founding members [the team of "het eerste uur"], the advisors, the Directorate of Culture and the cultural center of Kifoko.

Introduction

On August 25, 1988, the social-cultural association "Kifoko" celebrated its fifth anniversary. The occasion was marked by a number of activities. The highlight was the presentation of a "jubilee

report." From that report, Kifoko has attempted her own study/history to document as well as to inform the community about [the group's] objectives. Kifoko's governing board's attention was focused early on the elements of Maroon culture that have become threatened as they have become diluted.

Of the Aukanes culture we knew that, in part, the past informs the future. Truly that part contains much information on earlier social and cultural life. It goes under others as the "Gaansamapee," the play of the elders. Gaansamapee is a series of music genres, above all those carried out by adults and elders on special occasions. They are songs that give examples from the social lives of the Aukaners. To better understand these songs, a basic familiarity of lifestyles of the Aukaners is essential. This development encouraged Kifoko to rehearse and present the traditional Aukanes music and dance styles, and also to research the cultural aspects that are narrowly interwoven with the music. And thus the social and cultural lifestyles, traditional clothing and hairstyles became a primary focus. In order to disseminate the information among the broader public, Kifoko added on a theatrical component. Different activities and ceremonies that find a normative place in the context of traditional culture can be imitated on diverse podia.

In general, the different ethnic groups of Suriname know little about the culture of other groups. The average Surinamer is therefore poorly informed about Maroon societies in the interior. Truly this ignorance leads to false preconceptions and reciprocal discrimination.

I hope with this summary of the history of the association Kifoko, the current members have sufficient encouragement to go forward with the study of all of the important facets of the group. Additionaly, I hope that with the following I have made a contribution to cultural solidarity.

André Mosis

The History of the Founding of Kifoko

The workshop of the artist Kingbotho (1982)

After successful participation in a group exhibit in Gallery Egi Du (1981), I became more convinced of the need for my own workspace. On May 1, 1982, this wish came to fruition. With help from Leo Sampai, alias Tjofoni, then a student at NATIN (Nature Technology Institute), I came to rent the house of his grandfather, Da-Sampai. The unoccupied house stood on Christoffel Kerstenstraat, no. 24. This was my workshop. I was enormously stimulated by the atmosphere in this workshop in which I could manufacture art in a range of media. Beyond paintings, I also produced posters, necklaces, and I promoted the sale of these products. Moreover, we kept up a daybook, to keep track of events and business interests. The workshop was frequented by artists, purchasers, students, and even thieves. Among the well-known visitors to the workshop were George Ramdjawansing and Johan Zebeda. Even the well-known American arts promoter, Dr. Semalia Lewis, editor and publisher of the magazine, Black Art, paid a visit to the studio before visiting the Maroon village, Santigron.

Mr. Raymond Misiedjan, then employed by Telesur and President of the young people's organization Toe Wan Man (unity creates power) had put aside money to buy textile painting materials. With the purchase of the textile painting equipment, I was able to create a facility in which I could transfer images onto clothing, etc. Toe Wan Man also used the workshop to house their own meetings, as they did not have a space of their own. Among the first paintings I created in this facility were: Kingbotho boomiki (Kingbotho's flowers) and Gaanta Kofi Adumasuu. He was the founder of Kinsai, the tribe village of Piika—one of the Lo's of the Tapanahony.

I named the workshop Kifoko. Kifoko refers to a designated storage space within a [traditional] Aukan house. In this space are kept items that have fallen into disuse.

Kifoko Productions (1983)

An important role in the development of Kifoko was played by Lobi Cognac, aka Bruya, Nkatu. He definitively joined Kifoko on May 2, 1983. Cognac was involved with the Academy for Higher Art Education with a specialization in drawing. Previously he was at the Nola Hatterman Drawing School. These artifacts were marketed under the name, Kifoko Productions. These were bracelets, necklaces, posters, printed T-shirts, drawings, and decorated Pangi's. On May 3, 1983, Kifoko opened stand numbers 181-184 on the market adjacent to Kankantriestraat. Cognac and Rene Laurens were charged with selling. It was always busy at Kifoko's booths. Visitors were mainly young people under twenty-five years of age.

Kifoko House Band (1983)

The cassette recorder in the workshop was in constant use, playing Afro-Surinamese music, reggae, soul, and folk tales. There were traditional percussion instruments there [in the studio space] as well, for example apinti drums. On June 3, 1983, a new development began, involving a number of young musicians from the aleke band Clemencia, which had not been active for roughly two years. This visit led to the further involvement of singers Abele Albert Malon, aka Bote, Rudolph Anaje, and percussionist Atiye Balimoi. Thereafter, there were regular "jam sessions," which then became the "Kifoko House Band." On an irregular basis, the group would convene on Sundays to rehearse aleke music. [Through these rehearsals] The Kifoko House Band further solidified. Young Maroon musicians, singers, and dancers became registered members.

Kifoko Garden, the birthplace of the Traditional Music and Dance group Kifoko (1983)

In early August, 1983, my wife Laetitia Tojo and I, along with our five children moved to Christoffel Kerstenstraat, number 26—thus, next to the workshop. In the yard there were a number of empty and dilapidated homes. Cognac, Tjonfoli, and I converted into a space for various activities. We paved the ground with cement and gravel. In the middle of the tent we made a hole. Herein we had four thick glass cubes lights installed, connected to an electricity meter. This space was quickly named "Kifoko Garden." The music rehearsals and discussions that [formerly] took place in the workshop were now held in Kifoko Garden. Meanwhile, I knew my father-in-law, Da TIpa Tojo, to be a known apintiman and respected master drummer within the Paramakan community. I asked him to instruct young musicians in awasa and songe music. On August 25, 1983, I invited him to oversee a rehearsal. We invited all of the previously registered young singers, musicians, and dancers [to take part]. In turn, Da Tipa brought with him to the rehearsal another percussionist, Baa Nalibi Abani. My request to Da Tipa was actually to give a workshop for these young musicians, allowing them to learn the steps and music of awasa and songe correctly.

Studio and exhibition space Kifoko (1984)

The studio where it all began retained the name Kifoko, but for the most part it was used for my own work. There I exhibited the work that had been created in the selfsame space. The manufacture of Kifoko Productions continued to go forward. Toe Wan Man met there regularly. The profitability of the market booths went downhill because people often failed to pay directly. Rent on the workspace was cancelled due to renovation work, and the business lease was terminated in November, 1984. I had my drawing and painting supplies shipped to my home address. At this point, Kifoko closed down its market booths. Kifoko, the studio of Kingbotho, existed from May 1982-1984.

'Kifoko' Bureau for Art and Culture and the Youth Organization, 'Toe Wan Man' (1984)

The youth organization, Toe Wan Man, has entered into discussion several times already. Given the special relationship between this organization and Kifoko, it is necessary to add further explanation. On April 7th, 1980, Toe Wan Man was established upon the initiative of André Mosis and Paul Abena. Raymond Misiedjan was elected chairman. Toe Wan Man would include a focus on development problems in the interior. During the first four years, Toe Wan Man did not have a sound structure, or an adequate meeting place. There were gatherings at the houses of individual members, but since the establishment of the workshop, this space was also used regularly. Since Leo Sampai and I were both members of the organization, this was not a problem. In the workshop, the statutes of Toe Wan Man and other [documents] were formulated. Toe Wan Man had already devised a number of agencies [branches], including one for arts and culture. Members of the Kifoko band would be designated to this branch, under the direction of André Mosis and Leo Sampai. This mix of functions would create problems in the years to come.

The proclamation of Toe Wan Man coincided with the celebration of its fourth anniversary on April 7th, 1984, in [celebrated at the] PWB (Paraman Werknemers Bond) on the Hogerhuys Street. During this 'kultru konmakandra' [cultural gathering], Kifoko performed for the first time as a large group, presenting both aleke music and awasa music and dance. The traditional music group Denku, led by Anicle Awagi, and Masoewa, led by Thomson Joekoe, also contributed large music and dance performances. The turnout was exceptional and the whole event was a great success.

The Breaking Point of Toe Wan Man and Kifoko (1985)

At a review meeting of Toe Wan Man held in early 1985 in Moengo, in which, due to circumstances, the members of Kifoko could not be present, a resolution was adopted which stated that Kifoko

would become the official name of the art and culture branch of the organization. The music group Kifoko could only perform under the auspices of the group Toe Wan Man. This resolution was the breaking point between the two organizations. The members of the music group Kifoko refused to operate in a situation in which they would be dependent on the organization Toe Wan Man.

Advice (1985)

In order to resolve the conflict that arose [between Kifoko and Toe Wan Man], I solicited the advice of André Pakosie and Mr. André Naarden. André Pakosie has expertise in Maroon culture as well as extensive experience with Maroon organizations. Mr. André Naarden was a politician and was then giving training to PNR (Partij Nationalisch Republiek/National Republican Party). As a sympathizer of the PNR, I also followed his political training.

-André Pakosie advised that I go back to Toe Wan Man and set up an association for Maroon artists under the name Kifoko.

-André Naarden suggested that both parties (Toe Wan Man and Kifoko) had to reconvene and talk. If they agreed, an intermediary should be called. If they did not, there had to be a working structure under which Kifoko could continue to develop.

The two consultants both identified me as the person best equipped to advise the young musicians as to their further development. I was encouraged by all sides to take further action. I ended up working with the following persons: Robbie Alfasie, Akroemang Lando, Maria Saiwinie Dewini, Madeleine Boodoe, John Willy and Kwamina Tawo.

The First Housing of Kifoko

With mediation by André Naarden, Kifoko came to rent a small office space on Laat en Dadelstraat in the Wie Na Wie Community Center. First there was a good conversation with Pa-Sam, the

spiritual father of Wie Na Wie, after which the group was given the green light [to use the space]. On April 1, 1985, Kifoko moved to the new building. In this center the group rehearsed and used the large function room for lectures and exhibitions. The one hundred guilder per month rental fee was initially paid by Kifoko, but temporarily taken over by the Housing Foundation. Association grew to 56 active members, including musicians. Public interest also increased. Partly due to these developments, the group adopted an elected board.

Elected Officers

On May 5, 1985, the following persons were elected:

| | |
|---|---|
| André N. Mosis | President |
| Lando Akroemang | Vice President |
| Johannes C. Tojo | First Secretary |
| Robbie Alfasie | Second Secretary |
| Leo N. Atomang | First Treasurer |
| Saiwinie M. Dewinie | Second Treasurer |
| Albert Malon | Commissioner |
| Jacobus N. Tojo | Commissioner |
| Lobi N. Cognac | Commissioner |

Objectives of Kifoko

The objectives of the socio-cultural association Kifoko are to explore, document, and disseminate Bush Negro culture. Since 1987 the concept Bush Negro culture has replaced Afro-Surinamese culture. More recently, the term Maroon has supplanted the term Bush Negro.

Advisors

The following people functioned as advisors for the group:

André M. Pakosie, advisor of cultural affairs and documentation
Mr. André Naarden, legal and housing advisor
Da Tipa Tojo, advisor for the development of the Gaansama Pee

Commissions

In addition to the administration and advisors we also installed a number of commissions, including:

Motivation commission
Verification commission
Information commission
Documentation Commission

The Commissions of Kifoko

Given the special nature of the commissions, I will briefly describe each.

The Motivation Commission

Was introduced for a number of reasons that hang together with the specific socio-cultural backgrounds of the Maroons. The Western type of administrative organization has [often] created problems. This is related to the operation of phylogenic relationships of the Maroons, the family ('uncles and aunts') has the right to prohibit the younger generation (sisters' children) from participating in certain activities. This can even occur when a high school or college is the matter at hand. Another problem that contributes to the situation is the hierarchical structure within associations. Should the president, for instance, be younger than various other leaders, then he should approach those members very carefully and with authority. If he does not do that, he can easily be accused of crassness. A known expression is "Y e pee bakaa," (You're acting like a Westerner) and "Yu gaan nengee" (You're acting like a big man/ you're acting boldly) [you're acting above your station]. [At times] the attitudes of older members can seriously hamper younger members from doing their job properly. The motivation committee organized evening meetings with senior members, called "Gaansama sapaten," in order to discuss such problems.

Verification Committee

The Verification Committee controlled the revenues and expenditures of the association. Members also had a coordinating function in ad hoc projects.

Information Commision

The main task of the education committee was providing information to stakeholders about the activities of Kifoko, and maintaining contacts with certain agencies and various individuals. This committee also prepared educational meetings.

Documentation Commission

The Documentation Commission/Records Committee collected books, reports, and newspaper articles about Maroon culture. This committee also collected all documented rehearsals, performances, and conversations [meetings/interviews].

Confusion

Soon there was confusion between the various committees. A prominent member of the education committee came to me complaining that members of the documentation committee were stealing their work. The members of the documentation committee, however, found that the education committee interfered too much with their work and wanted too much control over the documentation. To put an end to this situation, I had the two committees merged under the name, 'Committee of information and documentation.' It appeared that those same people could work very well with one another as members of the same committee.

Exhibition "Revolution in Surinamese Art" Part 1, 25-08 to 09/02/1985.

This exhibition was organized in conjunction with the association Kifoko's 2-year anniversary. The background ideas for the exhibition were in opposition to the construction of

[national] culture (a 'political statement'). In cultural demonstration pieces, the art forms of the Maroons were underplayed or omitted altogether.

The concept of Afro-Surinamese art was for some cultural art makers synonymous with Creole art. This held true for such other areas as Afro-Surinamese music, Afro-Surinamese cuisine, Afro-Surinamese clothing/fashion, Afro-Surinamese culture, and indeed even Afro-Surinamers themselves. I was on this point in [complete] disagreement. During various lectures and debates in which ideas of [national] culture were being reformed, I aired my criticisms. 'Revolution in Surinamese Art Studies' was an appropriate title for this period [in this social context]. I prepared this exhibition along with Lobi Cognac, Maria Dewini, Pakira Kani, Johan Willy, and Mrs. Adipi from the district Brokopondo. It was a confluence of paintings, drawings, photographs, (wooden) sculptures, crafts, books, Maroon utensils/tools, and traditional costumes/clothing. The exhibit was held in the Wie Na Wie Cultural Center from August 25 through September 2nd, 1985. It was well attended and received political attention. Among the guests were senior officials of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, and senior military officials. In any case, the Assembly president, Rick Aaron, Minister Laurens Neede from Justice and Police, and Mrs. Alexander Vanenburg, assistant director from the Directorate for Culture were present. The exhibition drew considerable attention, most of all the clothing of Mrs. Adipi. Her work consisted of embroidered pangi's, kamisa's, bandya koto (shawls), tapestries, tablecloths, sheets, pillowcases, and handkerchiefs.

The layout of the exhibit was successful. It loosened something for various influential politicians. During subsequent discussions about Afro-Surinamese art, the officials who attended the exhibition changed their tone dramatically. I think that, partly due to this exhibition, I was invited to participate in the cultural activities of the Directorate of Culture, held under the motto, "Unity through Culture." The Cultural Relations Department organized these cultural activities in various venues to strengthen the feeling of unity among the diverse ethnic groups. I received

information about the intentions of the Directorate of Culture early on [in the planning process]. As a result I could influence planning and the inclusion of the Maroons in a variety of venues. With these developments, Kifoko gained attention and acclaim. During several performances, Kifoko proved to be a success, convincing others that:

> -The idea of Surinamese art is misleading, unless it includes a total panorama of cultural practices [by Suriname's diverse populations].
> -Art enables individuals, groups, and communities to give their cultures visibility.
> -Creativity leads to the highest level of cultural life, and that
> -Creativity is a prerequisite for the development of culture.

The subsequent exhibit, 'Revolution in Surinamese Art Studies, Part 2' was held in OASE pool and recreation park in Zorg en Hoop. It was a one-day exhibit of painting and Maroon crafts. Kifoko also provided music and dance performances during the event.

Amateur Course through the National Theatre Federation, February 5 through March 16, 1986.

Via Roy Danradj, then a playwright for the MOFO Theatre group in Cees Verpoort, in collaboration with the Drama Department of the Directorate of Cultures, I came in contact with the National Theatre Federation (NTF, or National Toneel Federatie). Thereafter I talked with Charda Ganga, who was then a university student and also involved in the NTF. Along this path, members of Kifoko received training in acting and directing. In order to introduce them to the practice of theatre, I introduced them first to Pandit Ramdew Raghoebier (director), who rehearsed with Kifoko members. Later I called on Wilgo Baarn, Eartha Silos, and Henk Tjon. In the first hour of practices, Kifoko members received training by these experts. Eartha Silos traveled abroad with Kifoko on several occasions.

Kifoko becomes inactive as a result of the civil war (1986)

The Civil War between the National Army and the Jungle Commando that broke out on July 21, 1986, did not leave Kifoko untouched. A number of members who were vacationing in the interior remained there, seeing no possibility of returning to the city. Another phenomenon that played tricks on us was the conflict that arose between supporters of the National Army, led by Desi Bouterse, and those aligned with Ronnie Brunswijk and the Jungle Commando. Meanwhile, some members of Kifoko were even professional soldiers in the National Army and others who were frontline fighters in the Jungle Commando. Both parties had supporters within the ranks of Kifoko. Fortunately, they avoided violence and partisan statements while in public. As a result of raids by the National Army, the group would often stay inactive for several weeks at a time. People limited themselves to only necessary rehearsals and discussions [held] midday. The government and various public figures did all they could to prevent the development of certain things. With the imposition of curfews and a ban on public assembly, even those members of Kifoko who were in the city could not attend the normal weekly rehearsals. Audiences failed to assemble for our presentations as a result of these same conditions. Meetings and vocal exercises were held at my home. Parents kept their children at home. This wretched situation was to last until December, 1986. In the Spring of 1987, Kifoko resumed its activities in the back of the Wie na Wie community center.

Kifoko's 2nd Residence

With the assistance of Rudie Botse, on March 3, 1987, Kifoko moved to NAKS (Na Arbeid Komt Sports/After Work Comes Play) at Thomson Street, where we trained two times per week—Wednesdays and Sundays from 4-6 PM. Rudie Botse was the former president of NAKS. During a delegation abroad, I had inquired about the possibility of housing Kifoko in the NAKS headquarters. The approximately one-year-long term [during which Kifoko resided there] can be seen as an important phase in Kifoko's development. Besides music and dance, attention was also paid to theatre. Here the group worked with researchers and experts in the fields of culture,

including former head of Culture Studies Terry Agerkop, Dr. Kwasie Adounum from Ghana, Frans Oliviera and Kwasie Koorndiik. [Members'] talents were also nurtured. Striking examples include José Tojo, Georgio Mosis, and Boyke Tojo.

Kifoko's 3rd Residence

I had spoken with Mr. Texira, then director of Theater Talia, about the possibility of using the theater's dance studio in the future. I had known Mr. Texira since 1984, when my paintings were exhibited in the theatre under the title, 'MI WROKO' (My Work). The exhibit attracted a great deal of media attention via television, newspapers, and radio. He was very interested in my passion. When I told him about Kifoko's plans, he reacted enthusiastically. He stated that he knew little about Maroon Culture. Nevertheless, he found that young Maroons have the opportunity to develop the field of art, namely theatre. According Texira, the bar was too high for the Maroons to pursue activities in Thalia, more so to organize events there. He praised me for taking a bold step. Texira wanted to contribute to my initiative by giving Kifoko space to use in the theatre. He wondered if Kifoko could attract a full audience. Performing for a sold-out audience became his goal. Early in 1988, Kifoko set up residence at Thalia. Here we could store our musical instruments, props, and administrative documents for little money. In that period, Kifoko totaled 158 registered members. The music and dance group consisted of 35 artists.

The Association Government During the First Term

Although there were occasional changes in both the administration and the committies, in my view, the structure worked relatively well for the first five years.

On the day of our first anniversary on August 25, 1988, the structure of Kifoko was as follows:

-Central Administration
-Verification Commission
-Documentation and Verification Commission
-Motivation Commission

The Central Administration:

| | |
|---|---|
| President | N. A. Mosis |
| Vice President | S. Dewinie |
| 1st Secretary | J. C. Tojo |
| 2nd Secretary | P. Tojo |
| 1st Treasurer | E. Lante |
| 2nd Teasurer | J. Tojo |
| Commissioners | Bainga Galimo/Georgio Mosis |

High Points

I would mention that these highs and lows are from the very beginning to the 7-year anniversary of the socio-cultural association Kifoko. On August 26, 2006, Kifoko celebrated its 23rd anniversary. For completeness it would be good if those who have come after me would like to add to the overview that I have provided here, for example by writing about themselves. They could thereby make use of the materials they have amassed, including collected information, photo's, audio, and images. As shown, in Kifoko's first five years it developed into a known and important cultural organization. This is evident in the numerous activities in which the group participated, both in Suriname and abroad, and the positive reactions they garnered. For clarity, I share the following high points:

-Music and Dance Presentations
-Exhibitions
-Seminars and Conferences
-National Cultural Events
-International Cultural Events
-Publications
-Information
-Schooling/Education
-Theatre
-Reporting
-Documentation
-Research Collaboration

Music and Dance Presentations

Kifoko has performed for a variety of events, including the welcoming of important guests from within and beyond Suriname and the conclusions of national and international conferences. The following are the most important performances from 1985-1986

-The opening of the Olade Conference in Torarica

-The reception for the Committee November 17 concerning International Student Day

-The reception of the Belgian delegation in the VOS

-The reception of senior members of the Brazilian military in the VOS

-The inauguration of the President of the Republic of Suriname

-The welcoming of India's Vice President at Zanderij Airport

-Musical accompaniment for Foundation Matagauri for a delegation from India

-Musical accompaniment at the Hotel River Club associated with the 40th conference of the Yaycees.

During 1985-1986, Kifoko performed at a total of 52 events. That is an average of one performance per week.

Lectures

-The Aukanes Religion, on June 6, 1985, by André Pakosi; poet, writer, historian, and traditional pharmacist. During this popular reading, Pakosie presented the structure of the winti religion. Since then, there has been heated debate about possession in the winti religion. Other organizations including Association Krabasi followed in Kifoko's path. They have also invited André Pakosie to give readings/lectures.

-The role of the Aukaners in the Interior [Civil] War was held on June 27 by Hugo Essed, author of the book, "De Binnenlandse Oorlog in Suriname 1613-1793."

-Perspectives on the Future of Maroon Culture in Suriname, by André Mosis and social anthropologist Dr. Chris Healy was held at the Anton de Kom University.

-Music as a communication medium between people and the supernatural world, by André Mosis in the Diaconessen House (12-05-88). This lecture was recorded on tape.

-The coming of age of an Aukanes girl by André Mosis.

-"Beat and Rhythm" by André Mosis in collaboration with the Cultural Center of Suriname (CCS) and the Indian Embassy.

Kifoko's Participation in National and International Art Exhibitions

-The exhibition concerning the visit of Mr. M. Bow to the O.A.S. in Suriname in Ons Erf (Our Yard).

-The exposition in Washington, D.C. The painting titled "Kifoko" was for 18 months on tour in America and Hong Kong. Upon return, the State purchased the painting and incorporated it into the State Collection.

Seminars and Conferences

-"How do we build a better Suriname?" organized by NAKS in the public high school in Lelydorp on January 18-19, 1986.

-Regional and national youth congresses, organized by the Directorate of Youth Affairs, held in NAKS community school and in the Hotel River Club of Leonsberg.

-Inter-Caribbean Youth Manifestation, held in Cayenne, French Guyana, from 8-13 February, 1986.

-World Festival for Youth and Students, held in Moskow, Russia, from 27 July through August 3, 1985.

National and International Cultural Events

-The 4th National Product Fair

-The Education Fair

-Emancipation Celebrations

-The 10th anniversary of political independence in 1985

-Celebrating the 5th year anniversary of the revolution of the Republic of Suriname in 1985

-Historical parade in February and November 1985

-The Cultural Festival of the Guyanas from 15-22 April, 1985

-FESTAC in Guadeloupe from July 28-August 8, 1986

-International Folkloric Festival held in six cities in France from10-21July, 1986

-Celebrating the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Guyana, from July 26-August 8, 1988

FESTAC in Guadeloupe from 12-24 July, 1989

Publications

-In collaboration with Kifoko, the Nationale Jongeren Beweging (NJB) the article, 'Aleke' was published in the monthly journal, TUKA, 3rd year, No. 1, Novemeber 1985. The documentation commission provided one of the color photographs for the cover.

-There are two films of performances of the Kifoko dance group, one of which is owned by Mr. A. Naarden.

-Some interviews provided to various media—radios, newspapers, and television.

-Employees of the Caribbean Desk of the National Information Service (NVS) sought out the Kifoko information center on Laat en Dadel Street, whereby information was provided concerning the Afaka script. Following this visit, the article, "Alphabetization in Suriname: Another Story (p. 100-105) in the book, "Suriname: A Corner Stone." The book was published in 1985 by the NVD in Paramaribo.

-Articles in De Ware Tijd

-An article concerning the "Bakakyoo pee" in Kála, 3 (1988), No. 1

-Video—performance of the dance drama "Salika" (begin again)

-Video—performance of the dance drama "Baké (Hip shaking)

Education and Training

Kifoko has done a great deal concerning education and training, both internally for its members, and externally, for the broader public. The weekly training sessions took place on Wednesday and Sunday from 4-6 PM. On Sunday there was musical training and on Sunday dance training (?). The association organized an informational meeting in collaboration with Stichting Lobi (Association Love). Experts were invited to educate young Maroons concerning sexuality, contraception, and venereal diseases. The presentations were well documented and supported with movies. Kifoko has participated an a broad range of meetings with other agencies and organizations.

**Theatre**

**In cooperation with the "Drama" department of the MINOWC and the Theatre Federation, Kifoko has performed in two theatre productions, Salika and Bake. Salika (Begin again) was in collaboration with the Directorate of Culture in Georgetown, marking the 150 year**

**anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Guyana. Salika was performed for the Surinamese public in September and October of 1988 in Theatre Thalia.**

-Bake (a combination of hip movements) was performed in Guadeloupe. It was performed a few more times, including at the Thalia Alakondre festival, from June-December, 1989.

Reporting

For every performance that Kifoko made, a committee member was assigned to report it. With information from these reports, an annual year-in-review was produced. [This information made it so that] the Board could get a clear picture of the individual contributions from the various committees. In addition, I kept a daybook in which I documented almost everything. I advised others to do this as well.

Documentation

Kifoko has, since her founding, sought to create an information center in which documentation and information can be provided to individuals, such as students. The association documents photo's, slides, traditional apparel, boeks, records, cassette tapes with traditional music and video footage with music and interviews.

Research Projects

The most important endeavor of Kifoko is the research, study, documentation, and dissemination of Afro-Surinamese Culture.

Above all the cultural aspects that are in danger of being forgotten demand attention. With this goal, in March, 1984, the association commenced research in traditional Aukanes music. This project is one of the association's long-term projects. In May, 1985, the association embarked on

this project with research into the traditional Maroon hairstyles. There were a few workshops organized by Maria Dewinie in the Community center, Wie na Wie. The research team, under my leadership, conducted fieldwork in the Marowijne district. The medical and cultural center Sabanapeti was sought out on several occasions. During these work visits, interviews were held, music was recorded and photographs were made. In the Brokopondo district, Kifoko visited the villages Marchall (kreek) and Alasbaka. This happened in collaboration with local organization M.A.J.O. and the villagers.

Under the motto, "Cultural Learning," Kifoko organized small trips to the various districts in order to make contact with regional organizations. On February 3, 1985, the Maroon village Santigron was visited, whereby interviews were held with village leaders and other notable figures. We took information concerning the history of the village, the social structure, and, naturally, music and dance.

An extremely important project in the formulation of the cultural understanding was the visit to Langetabbetje. High points from this visit were the meeting with Granman Cornelis Forster and the performance with a regional music group, "AGI PRISIRI." This cultural exchange was extremely positive for all concerned. Kifoko also had planned projects in Nickerie, Sipaliwini, Commewijne, Para, and Coronie. Of all these plans, an aleke festival was a priority. The organizing of cultural collaborations and the production of the "Gaansama Sapaten" [also] stood high up on the list of priorities.

As previously stated, Kifoko researched [topics including] traditional Aukanes music and dance styles, attire, and hairstyling. In the framework of these studies it is not lucky to fully disclose one's findings. Certain information from interviews and other materials is restricted to various members [of the group].

Collaboration

During its development, Kifoko has cooperated and exchanged information with other organizations for a number of ad-hoc projects. Besides government agencies, coordinating organizations, Kifoko has maintained contact with cultural organizations. This overview would be incomplete without mentioning the following organizations and agencies:

The Directorate of Culture
S.N.J.A.
Youth Matters
NAKS
Wie Na Wie
Thalia
N.J.B.
O.C.O.B.
M.A.J.O.
CCS
Denku
Mofina Brasa
Manda '84
Masuwa
Toe Wan Man

Kifoko has called for continuous cooperation at both regional and national levels. Kifoko has been part of the Federations of Organizations for the Interior (FBO) since 1988.

Departure from Suriname

Because of political unrest in Suriname, in 1990 I left for the Netherlands. When I announced my decision to the representatives of the committees, members were shocked. They asked me who could fill my position. I gave a two-part answer to this question: 'A managerial change must be made,' and 'a new artistic leader must be trained.' No one should take on this function lightly.

People can look within the standing committee members or hold a new managerial election.

The function of artistic leader must go to an ambitious person who will also ensure the groups continue to create high-quality performances.

# Appendix C: Genres

**Table 12**: Comparison of Genres Performed by Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba

| | **Kifoko** | **Saisa** | **Fiamba** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Awasa** | X | X | X |
| **Songe** | X | X | |
| **Bandammba** | | X | X |
| **Susa** | X | X | |
| **Loketo** | | | X |
| **Aleke** | | | X |
| **Mato** | X | | On One Piece |
| **Awawa** | | Occasional | |
| **Loonsei** | Occasional | | |
| **Uman Daguwe** | Occasional | | |

What I present here is a general overview of the principal genres featured by the groups with which I worked. While each style warrants greater study, my hope is that these descriptions will provide a useful starting point.

Historical information about the formation and early development of the performance styles *awasa, susa*, *songe*, *mato*, *banamba*, and *awawa* is illusive. The groups and individuals I interviewed were not able to supply information about the origins or early development of these dances. If such information is to be found, it is likely known only to a few and especially valued as information about the early iterations of Maroon society, from a period of time known alternately as *fesi-ten* (in Saramaccan) or *lowe-tin* (in Okanisi). Conservatively, we can say that all these genres have been practiced for many generations; in all likelihood, this is a gross understatement.[367]

*Awasa*

*Awasa* is broadly considered a secular social dance.[368] It originated among Ndyuka Maroons, however the dance has become popular among other Maroon subgroups as well. *Awasa* was the only genre ubiquitous to all the urban performance groups in this study, a point that speaks to its widespread appeal. Dancers wear ankle rattles, called *kawai*, which highlight the rhythmic variations

[367] *Mato, susa*, and *awasa* were all firmly established as canonical genres by the time Melville and Frances Herskovits conducted research in Suriname in 1928-29 (Herskovits and Herskovits 1936). Missionaries observed the aesthetic principles that are engaged through these dances were documented as early as the eighteenth century (Price and Price 1999, 245).

[368] This classification can be complicated by its performance funerary rites, which are hardly secular occasions. For all of the genres in a *gaansamapee*, the terms 'secular' and 'recreational' are an imprecise fit, however the genres that are most commonly related to Maroon spirituality (for instance *kumanti* music, or even the loose category *winti poku*) involve a more direct interaction with the spirit world, or at least a greater potential for such an interaction to occur. This picture is further complicated, however, in that secular music from earlier generations can be used to attract *yooka* (ancestor spirits.) In this capacity, *awasa* rhythms are performed frequently at *winti pees*, both Maroon and Creole. The Creole version of *awasa* used in *winti pees*, taught to me by Ernie Wolf, differs most significantly from the Maroon performance of the rhythm in the *pikin doon* part, which plays continually, instead of the Maroon practice of playing solely on the offbeats.

of their movements and contribute an important layer to a performance's sonic texture. Its simple basic step makes *awasa* accessible to beginners; the dance gains its character through nuanced manipulations of physical posture and rhythm. People delight in *awasa*'s seemingly inexhaustible capacity for variation and improvisation, which range in scale from subtle nuances to gymnastic feats and moments of audacious theatricality.

Chapter 6 offers a more extensive discussion of the dance's interactive framework and basic attributes.

*Songe/Agankoi*

Audiences with no previous exposure to Maroon performing arts often experience difficulty distinguishing *songe* from *awasa*. Both utilize variants of the *boli wataa* step, the same general postures, *kawai* ankle rattles, and the same principles of structural organization and intercommunication between singers, dancers, and drummers (discussed in Chapter 6). Like *awasa*, *songe* is a secular performance genre, with male and female dance styles, known respectively as *mannengeefutu* and *umanpikinfutu*. For those familiar with the various Maroon performance genres, however, *songe* and *awasa* have pronounced differences that make each style instantly distinguishable from one another.[369]

This genre is named after a freshwater fish, known as either *songe* or *agankoi*.[370] The dance's signature movements reference this fish and its unique ability to swim sideways, and even

[369] According to the dancers in Kifoko, there are a series of small but significant differences in the *boli wataa* and *waka kon/waka gwe* movements between *awasa* and *songe*. When dancing *boli wataa* in *songe*, instead of stepping 'right, together, left, together,' as in *awasa*, the foot moving on the 'together' steps should be placed slightly in front of the standing foot. Instead of the arms circulating at or below the waist, in *songe*, the hands rise, one at a time, so the forearms are nearly parallel with the dancer's torso. When dancing *waka kon* or *waka gwe* in *songe*, Kifoko members subdivide the main beat (as played by the *tun* drum), striking their heels against the ground with every subdivision. Saisa used this version of *waka kon/waka gwe* for *awasa* as well as *songe*.

[370] Both the fish and the performance genre can be called either *songe* or *agankoi*. I found that the dance genre was referred to more frequently as *songe*, the fish as *agankoi*.

backwards.[371] As a result, these fish are extremely hard to catch. For this reason, fishers hunt the *agankoi* with a bow and arrow, rather than a fishing line or net. Dancers performing in the *mannengeefutu* style will often imitate the action of wielding a bow and arrow. At other times, male dancers incorporate references to various other animals that can be found in the rainforest.[372] The side-to-side motion of the *umanpikinfutu* references the female fish as she guards her eggs.

The footwork that provides the basis for both the male and female style requires a considerable degree of coordination—as one foot steps in place, utilizing a vertical movement axis, the other moves horizontally. In *umanpikinfutu*, a dancer moves horizontally within the dance space either by scooting one foot along the ground to the dancer's right or left while maintaining perpetual contact with the ground, or moving in a given direction using a series of small steps. In *mannengeefutu*, a dancer has the additional option of moving his ankle in a horizontal motion while the ball of the foot maintains contact with the ground. Which foot moves horizontally indicates in which direction the dancer will go. (I.e., if the left foot is moving horizontally, a dancer will either stay in one place or move to the left.) The broad consensus among the members of Kifoko, Saisa, and Fiamba was that *songe* is an especially challenging genre for dancers.

The tempo of the dance is considerably slower than for *awasa*, and I noticed dancers tended to make comparatively bigger motions with their arms, whether making fluid motions (at times referencing water, the swimming motions of the *agankoi*, or flight of a bird), or slower sideways movements with graceful turns of their wrists, drawing attention to the direction in which a dancer is travelling.

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[371] Personal communication, wilderness guide Boikie Guno Hooglied (10/2011).

[372] Saisa stated explicitly that a broad range of nature imagery could be worked into a *mannengeefutu* rendition of *songe*. It was especially common for male dancers to imitate a bird in flight.

A notable feature of *songe* drumming in comparison to *awasa* is that, in place of the unvarying pulse of the *tun*, the same drum plays a more dynamic rhythm called *atompai*.[373] The same drum plays both the *tun* and *atompai* parts, but is called either *tun* or *atompai*, depending on the rhythm being played upon it at a given time.

*Aleke*

*Aleke* has been introduced already in Chapter 5, with particular attention paid to its instrumentation. The genre has maintained a steady popularity from its early years to the time of writing; its fan base spans upwards of three generations. In fact, a band's 'lineage' (developed through family relations and older groups' mentorships) is a common topic in the songs themselves.[374]

By most accounts, *aleke* got its name as a shortening of the name Alexander, in tribute to Alexander Grandisson, a Creole gold worker who would join the Ndyuka workers in their music making after work, sharing with them many of the Creole music styles that were used to inflect the Ndyuka-based drumming, as well as his own dynamic style of performing. Several years later, an *aleke* musician, also named Alexander, or 'Baa Aleke*,'* rose to prominence among the Ndyuka, further strengthening the connection between this new style and its name. As *aleke* gained popularity, it spread to the neighboring Aluku and Paramaka subgroups of the Maroons.[375] While the overwhelming majority

[373] In the track notes to the 2011 CD of his field recordings, Bilby notes that, among the Aluku population with which he worked, the *atompai* was played with one stick and one free hand ("Track Notes" to Bilby 2011, 8). The groups I worked with in Paramaribo all played this rhythm with one stick; the free hand could echo the rhythm played by the sticked hand a half a beat later (very softly), or not play at all. With the two hands playing, the rhythm mirrored that played by the *pikin doon* (for which some of Bilby's informants used the words *sebikede* or *pudya*), albeit with different tonal and timbral characteristics.

[374] *Aleke* bands Fondering, Bigi Monie, and A Seke Dotie all perform such songs. The St. Laurent-based band, Bigi Ting, is among the most frequently mentioned as 'fathering' this younger generation of musicians.

[375] This information was relayed to me by various individuals in Suriname and French Guyana, is further corroborated by written descriptions by André Pakosie (date, page) and Kenneth Bilby (2001, 32, 41n7).

*aleke* musicians are men, women have become increasingly active in the genre as singers. These include "Queen Aleke" Sa Wowi, Zus Mien of Boi Fu A Ting, and 'Tanya' of Masanga 2000.[376]

The dance style was widely described to me as 'free,' yet there were common movement characteristics, particularly for the women, who would take small steps to either side while moving their hips in a circular motion in time to the music. Arms were generally kept to the dancer's sides, occasionally raised in appreciation of a musician's inspired performance, or as audiences sang along with their favorite songs.[377]

In the late 2000's, some bands, in particular the band Fondering, began to experiment with developing dance moves that correspond to their songs. (Sama Belle, Djompo tji). Similar strategies were also being made in other genres. Norma Sante's hit with Naks Kaseko Loco, "Koko Gowtu," is one such example. These songs were especially popular in concert, in which audience members enjoyed dancing the song's signature move along with the singer.

*Loketo*

*Loketo* is a Surinamese classification of a music style that consists of music that is known elsewhere as Congolese *soukous*, and also local adaptations and interpretations of that music, melded with other regional genres including *kawina* and *kaseko*. A more thorough description of the genre is included in Chapter 5.

*Mato*

[376] Tanya was a relatively new member of Saisa during my 2008-2009 fieldwork term. Interestingly, though Tanya was widely known as a singer, she seldom sang with Saisa, recording only a part of one song on the group's 2011 CD.

[377] Raising the arms in this way is a practice that is also common in older genres, including *awasa*. I would venture that this is a physical response to musical enjoyment that transcends genre divisions.

Some of the interactive and performative forms that are described as *mato* were introduced in Chapter 3. As previously mentioned, the term can apply to a number of different forms. Kenneth Bilby offers the following schema:[378]

> As far as I've been able to ascertain, "mato" in Aluku/Ndyuka actually has three senses:
>
> 1. [A] music-dance genre (which includes both partial spoken folk-tales and songs, with drumming, dance, etc.) [This is the version of mato performed by Kifoko.]
> 2. Spoken folktales (i.e., anansi toli) in general, associated with wakes or other funerary events (performed in their entirety, apart from dance-drumming contexts)
> 3. Riddles[379]

To Bilby's model, I would add that *mato* was used by my research contacts more generally, in reference to music that had a narrative element. To give one example, on multiple occasions I heard people use the word *mato* to describe 'Faluma' a popular song composed by Sa Agi of the kaskawi band, Ai Sa Si, and later made famous internationally by Allison Hinds and the Barbadian group, Square One. This song has narrative content, but stylistically it bears no other similarities to the *mato* music-dance genre.

*Susa*

Kifoko and Saisa performed two very different versions of *susa*—I will discuss each in turn. The version of *susa* that I found was most common aligned with Kifoko's interpretation. According to this version, *susa* is performed by two men as a competitive game. The objective in this game was to demonstrate one's ability to anticipate an opponent's moves while simultaneously defying that

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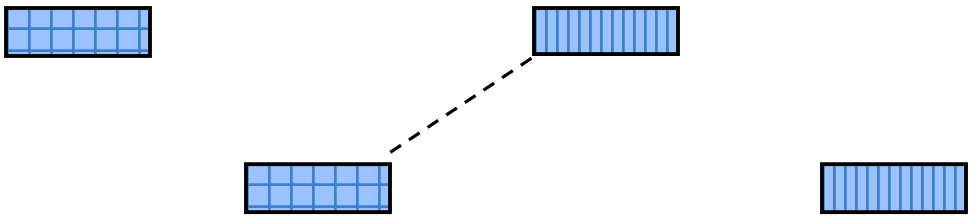
[378] Personal communication, 2/21/12.

[379] The riddled version of *mato* is one to which I had minimal exposure. For an engaging introduction to this aspect of *mato*, several examples, and the general context of performance as the Prices encountered it among the Saramaka Maroons, see Price and Price 1999, 268-271.

person's expectations. The opponents face each other, while the drums beat out a steady rhythm, and a crowd (predominantly comprised of women) gathers around the two opponents, singing, dancing, and cheering. One dancer is designated as the *ini sei* (inside) competitor, the other, *doo sei* (outside). The objective of the ini sei dancer is to stamp the ground when his opponent stamps the ground with the same foot. Thus, the *ini sei* dancer would attempt to stamp the ground with his right foot while his opponent also stamps the ground with his right foot. Because the dancers are facing each other, the stamped feet are diagonal from one another. This diagonal relationship is deemed *ini sei*. When the feet directly opposite one another strike the ground at the same time, as indicated in Figure (#), this is termed *doo sei*.

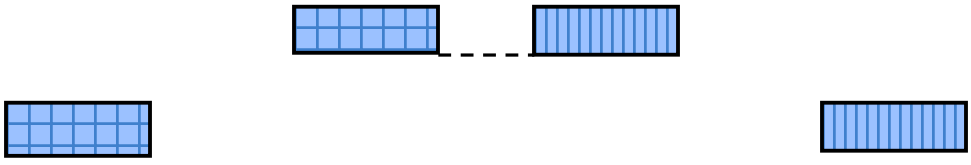
**Table 13:** *Susa: Ini Sei* and *Doo Sei Futu*
The two opponents' feet are designated by the different patterns.

*Doo sei futu:*



Player A Player B

*Ini sei futu.*



Player A Player B

The game proceeds at a rapid pace, making it, at times, difficult for people to judge whether one or the other competitor has one. There are ways in which a player can attempt to *fufu* (fool) their opponents and onlookers. Two examples that the members of Kifoko mentioned: first, if an opponent does not definitively lift his foot off the ground and, second, by claiming to have won when, in fact, he did not catch his opponent when both of their feet were down. The lead drummer is the ultimate arbiter in these instances. Through various cues, he can indicate if there is a decisive victory, if a player did not 'play fair,' as in the aforementioned instances, or if there is no decisive victory—if it is unclear what happened and the players should '*bigin baka'*—begin again. The winner is said to '*kii*' (kill) his opponent. The defeated person leaves the performance space and another man takes his place. Typically the victor will rotate to the other position—if initially he was playing *doo sei*, he will play *ini sei* in the following match.

Saisa's version of *susa* had no direct relationship—in terms of either the performance aesthetic or social function—to the version described above. In their performances, *susa* was considered a religious genre, and bore similarities to *kumanti* music and dance. In performance, it happened fairly regularly that someone at the event would be possessed by a *winti* spirit, even if the content of the event was considered secular.[380] These pieces were hardly ever practiced in Saisa rehearsals.

*Bandammba/Banamba*

*Banamba*, also known as *bandammba*, is a Saramakan Maroon dance style, performed primarily by women, that is generally thought to be provocative or to have an erotic subtext. The term *bandammba* is used in previous scholarship (including van Kempen (2002), Price and Price (1994,

[380] I witnessed several such possessions at *fojali osos*—birthday parties, and once even at a political rally.

1999), and Herskovits (1936).[381] Although this term is widely used by most (but not all) of the Saramakans with whom I spoke, in the groups with which I worked and within the city as a whole, *banamba* was the name more frequently used, in speech and in its written form.[382]

Bandammba highlights a dancer's ability to isolate and manipulate movements in her waist, hips, and buttocks. The most characteristic elements include the quick, articulated movements of the hips, called *koti*, and smoother, undulating rolls of the waist and hips, called *lolo*. A woman's arms are generally held out to the sides or above her head, and her feet and torso are supposed to stay relatively still, further drawing attention to her skillful manipulation of her waist and hips. Bandammba is performed wearing a pangi (a traditional wrap skirt), with another piece of cloth, called an *angula*, tied around the dancer's waist, further magnifying her hip movements. When men choose to participate, they often join a female dancer, adding their own stomach rolls and stylized pelvic motions in playful reference to a flirtatious or sexual encounter, or to express their own sensuality.

According to many of my research contacts, the dance is accompanied by singing and percussion, either clapped, played on the side of a box (called a *maanda*),[383] or by an ensemble of drums known individually as *doon* or *apinti doon*. Whereas, in the other genres that the three groups in this study performed, the lead drummer played the lowest pitched drum, Saisa performed the lead drum part for *bandammba* on the middle pitched drum—the drum that, in the other genres in their repertoire, would play the *pikin doon* part.

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[381] The Prices spell the genre *'bandámmba*.'

[382] I decided to use the term *bandammba* in the body of the dissertation for two main reasons—first, the greater number of Saramakans who used this term, and second, for ease of identification, in keeping with the precedent set by other scholars. I do believe, however, that the pervasive use of this other pronunciation is a more complex matter than simply people who do not know the 'real' genre. This is a subject in need of further investigation.

[383] Among those I talked to at considerable length about the genre was Freddy Huur, the director and organizer of Paramaribo's annual Banamba Contest.

This genre, as I encountered it in Paramaribo, was subject to an especially wide array of interpretations and debates over its origins and general significance. These topics are in need of further research, the differences between the interpretations I was told point to some very interesting issues concerning the separate strands of traditions that developed in specific locations within Saramaka territory. Preliminary research suggests that the degree to which missionaries were able to establish a presence in a community and *their* reactions to the dance are a crucial piece to this puzzle.

Another topic that I find particularly interesting is the ways in which the various people I talked to about the genre used adjectives including sexy, sexual, sensual, and erotic, either to describe or define the dance style, or in insisting upon what it is not.[384] Their various interpretations were clearly affected by the meaning behind the dance as they had come to understand it, as well as the implications of these various words with which to describe it. Further, I can only imagine that some of these individuals were also reacting to what my interests in the genre might be, and how it might be represented and retold, given my own understandings of that same vocabulary.

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The following genres were seldom performed or rehearsed, but were nonetheless considered part of the repertoire of at least one of the three groups in this study.

*Awawa*: This genre, as performed by Saisa, had no danced or percussive component. It consisted of a sung exchange of criticism and (generally mild) insults (*odo*) between two performers, most often a man and a woman. In the performances I witnessed, these exchanges were playful and good-

[384] One factor that might have contributed to this variety is the fact that I am not fluent in the Saramaka language, and therefore research contacts had the additional task of giving descriptions and explanations a second or third language—these conversations and interviews were conducted in Dutch or in Okanisi and, in one interview, in English.

natured—a singer's skill was gauged by the cleverness of their insinuations and wordplay. Between each singer's message (generally delivered as a couplet), the other people in attendance would sing a short, descending line, after which the other *awawa* singer would sing a response or retaliate in kind.

*Loonsei*: This genre, developed among the Ndyuka and generally among the Eastern Maroon groups, is considered one of the influential precursors to *aleke*.

*Uman Daguwe*: This music is connected with ritual music for the *Papa* (boa constrictor) spirit. Kenneth Bilby describes Uman Daguwe as follows: *Papa* ceremonies typically close with this "lighter" genre, meant for the enjoyment of women dancers after the more serious business of invoking the Vodu gods has been concluded. (Its name means "*Daguwe* for women" —*Daguwe* being a synonym for "Papa," or "Vodu.") ("Track Notes" from Bilby 2011, 15.) Kifoko closed some of their rehearsals, and some of their longer performance engagements, with this genre, performed in a circle.

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